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Major D. Tyrie Laing.

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THE

MATABELE REBELLION

1896

79648

WITH THE BELINGWE FIELD FORCE

BY

MAJOR D. TYRIE LAING

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INTRODUCTION

MY purpose in writing this book is to discharge a duty I owe to the officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of the Belingwe Field Force, lately under my command, by placing on record their share in the quelling of the Matabeleland rebellion of 1896.

Firstly, to the men of Belingwe, who gallantly stuck together, held their position, and the district in practical subjection, until Mr. Rhodes was enabled to send a force to the relief of the beleaguered garrison and who afterwards marched out, aided to subjugate the rebels, and restore order. Nothing could be more striking and pleasing a feature to me than the behaviour of the enrolled volunteers, and that of many

men of different nationalities, amongst whom I have much pleasure in mentioning Lieutenant Malcolm McCallum and Sergeant Douglas, Americans of the very best stamp; Descalzie, an Italian, and several others, who might have lain under our protection, but preferred to share the duties of their comrades in misfortune. They voluntarily and cheerfully joined in the hardships, which they so nobly helped to lighten. I thank them now for all the assistance they rendered so willingly, and shall ever remember with pride that such good fellows placed themselves under my command.

The behaviour of the volunteers, under all circumstances, was worthy of every praise. Their work was hard and trying, rendered all the more difficult by their having to sleep in the new earthworks in a tropical country. Most of them suffered from fever in consequence. Still they did their duty without a grumble, and never once questioned the authority of their officers. I appreciated their valuable assistance, and shall ever re-

member them with gratitude and pleasure. Their loyalty made everything so much easier and saved the lives of every one in the Belingwe garrison. Where all did so well, it would indeed be invidious to mention names, but I cannot pass without mentioning Mr. A. J. Wilson, the late Quartermaster of the Belingwe garrison, as all the fever-stricken men will remember. Before we had a doctor, Mr. Wilson's presence was seldom absent from the hospital, and to him all of us are indebted for many kindnesses. For the others, I can only say I was proud to be one of them.

Our Cape boy servants, too, behaved splendidly, and as they had all been in the service of white men for years, were a most valuable addition to the garrison. Being, as a rule, good shots, they were armed, and did their duty in turn with the white men, whom they emulated, and assisted in the very best manner. To show that they were to be trusted, I may mention that two of them rode through with despatches from Belingwe

to Gwelo, which enabled Mr. Rhodes to send us the much-needed reinforcements.

Secondly, to Captain Harman Hopper and the twenty brave fellows who volunteered to follow him from Victoria to march to our assistance, strengthening us by their numbers, as well as bringing with them a much-wanted supply of ammunition and a Maxim gun. Little has been said or heard of Captain Hopper up to the present, but I feel certain that of those who are indebted to him and his companions, the men of Belingwe will always be glad to recall his name and those of the men who followed him. I am also sure that none of the garrison will ever forget the pang of pleasure and relief that shot through their breasts when Hopper's advance-guard appeared on the crown of the ridge, about a mile east of the Belingwe fort.

Lastly, I must pay a tribute to the men who, under orders of Mr. Rhodes, marched from Tuli, under the command of Lieutenant Yonge, for the relief of Belingwe. Of this

party I desire to make particular mention for the following reasons—namely, that, with the exception of about thirty of them, who belonged to Rhodesia, the remainder had come from all parts of South Africa, with the simple, and, I may say, heroic intention of assisting their distressed fellow-countrymen in Rhodesia. Many of them, to my own certain knowledge, had left lucrative businesses and employments. Some of them had abandoned all they had in different parts of the country to throw in their lot with us, not for what they could gain but simply because they wished to give a helping hand to those in much need of it; and right nobly and willingly did they perform their self-allotted work. Most of them were sportsmen, good riflemen, and good horsemen, imbued with a loyalty and patriotic sense of duty which reduced discipline to pleasure and elevated my command to an honour.

When the relief of Belingwe was completed and all the different parties fused into one, it formed what might be called a

truly Imperial force, composed as it was of members from every part of the British Empire — England, Ireland, Scotland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Natal, Cape Colony, and India. All had their representatives, even the Free State and Transvaal furnishing a quota; and I must not forget to mention that Germany, Sweden, Russia, and Italy had representatives in the force.

Of course, amongst such a mixed assemblage there were a few who did not quite conform to the necessary rules until these had to be forcibly explained. Three very good men, I am sorry to say, had to be discharged on the march. They mistook insubordination for independence. Yet, when there was so much good in the column, the little leaven of dissatisfied spirits had not the slightest effect, and altogether we got along admirably.

Their loyalty to the Queen and to the Chartered Company was proved throughout, and although the column has been dis-

banded and its deeds are now relegated to the past, I believe that there is one who remembers that there was such a body of men, and to him, the Right Hon. C. J. Rhodes, the Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, and men of the Belingwe Field Force, I dedicate this work. In doing so I wish to thank them all for conforming to my wishes and orders, and enabling me to be of slight service to the cause of civilisation and the expansion of the British Empire.

As my personality was to a considerable extent affiliated with all the moves of the Belingwe Field Force and garrison, I trust that, under the circumstances, the perhaps too frequent use of the personal pronoun will be excused.

CHAPTER I

Apprisal of rebellion — Meeting in Belingwe Hotel — Appointment of officers—Construction of defences—Disloyalty of native police — Looting of the "Great Belingwe" camp—Narrow escape of miners—Volunteers to their rescue.

THE first intimation we, at Belingwe had of any real danger from a rebellious rising of the natives in Rhodesia was on the morning of the 26th of March, 1896.

About 7.30 a.m., whilst at breakfast, Mr. A. J. Wilson and myself were surprised by a visit from Mr. S. N. G. Jackson, the Acting Native Commissioner at Belingwe, who appeared rather excited. After having been asked to take a seat, he explained to us that he had just received, by a native police runner, a letter from Mr. Fynn, Acting Native Commissioner at Inseza, which he handed to me. It was as follows :—

"SIR,—I regret to have to report to you that the whole of the Cunningham family have been brutally murdered, and also Maddocks, manager of the Nelly Reef. Two of his miners got off, severely cut about. These two miners tell us that about thirty natives came up to their camp in a friendly way and sprang upon them with kerries and battleaxes. This happened the night before last, between six and seven.

"All the Europeans in this part of the district have concentrated here, as things look very serious as regards the natives. All the natives have cleared out of their kraals, probably fearing that the murders having been committed in their district they will be blamed.

"It is hard to say whether this organisation has been general throughout the country, which I fear is the case. We have received no communication from either Buluwayo or Filabusi yet.

"I would advise you to see Captain Laing and get all the prospectors to concentrate at

Belingwe Store and Laager.

the Belingwe Store, until we can get further news. We expect some one over this morning from town.

"One of the murderers was shot by the police I sent after them. They came across five of them, all with guns, and that these men were Maholes I cannot believe. That the gang were composed of Matabeles—I should rather think they were Matabeles.

"Coach has not arrived yet.

"I have the honour to be,

"Yours obediently,

"(Signed) H. P. Fynn, A.N.C."

After discussing the situation for a few minutes it was decided to send out information to all the outlying camps, as soon and as quietly as possible—Jackson sending out his two mounted white police and several native police, and I despatching my engineer, Edwin Vallentine, who happened to be at hand at the moment, on one of the company's best horses, to call in all the miners working for the company, and all others on his route

to and from the different camps. His instructions were to ride as hard as possible, see the men at the various camps, tell them to take their bandoliers and rifles, go to the different works and order the natives employed to put all provisions and light stuff into the company's wagons, all the heavy and less damageable material down the shafts, bring the ropes away, inspan the wagons, and get back to headquarters camp as quickly as possible, fetching as many natives as they could with them, but under strict surveillance.

I strongly advised Mr. Jackson to disarm his native police at once, but he had great faith in their loyalty and demurred ; and as I was not then quite sure of the position, I did not think it advisable to interfere with one of the Chartered Company's officials — especially when he was doing his very best to assist— although at the time I felt certain that the native police would be on the side of any rebellion in Matabeleland. I, however, came to the conclusion to leave Mr. Jackson to

carry out his own ideas for the time being, but made up my mind to watch the police under him very closely.

As soon as the messengers were sent off I went up to the camp of Sir Frederick Frankland, Assistant Mining Commissioner of Buluwayo, which was only about a hundred yards from my house. Wilson went over to the general store to warn the men there and get the ammunition and rifles in readiness. Sir Frederick had only arrived in Belingwe, from Inseza, two days before the outbreak, accompanied by his assistant, W. C. Beaty-Pownall, and were engaged in inspecting the different mining properties in the Belingwe district for the Chartered Company. They were just about to saddle up and go out for the day when I got to their camp. I could see at once that they had not heard of the native rising. I told them what I had heard and had already done. Sir Frederick was very much upset when he learnt of the fate of the Cunningham family. He had been a guest at their

house only a few days previously, and had been all over the Inseza district, where most of the murders had been committed, and knew nearly all the people there. He and Pownall at once decided to throw in their lot with the Belingwe men, and volunteered their assistance on the spot.

The disarming of the native police was then discussed, and Sir Frederick coincided with my opinion. We then rode over to the police camp, unarmed, so as not to cause any suspicion. Mr. Jackson had gone off, leaving Mr. W. R. Wilson, his assistant, in charge. We told Mr. Wilson we were in favour of having the native police disarmed, and he thought it was advisable, but would not do anything in the absence of his chief. We then decided to leave matters as they were for the time being, and proceeded to the general store, which was about a thousand yards from the police camp. Here we found all my company's employees busy getting their rifles and ammunition ready for the men coming in

from the outlying camps. Sites were then selected on which to erect two small redoubts, to protect the store and cover the defenders.

About 11 a.m. Mr. Malcolm McCallum, manager for the "Buluwayo Syndicate," rode up to the store to see me. He said, "I have had notice from the police, and have put my men on their guard, and have come to see you and find out what is to be done." The situation was explained to him, and he departed at once, to bring in his men and supplies.

Shortly after midday my company's wagon, with the miners from "The Bob's Luck" and "Wanderers' Rest" and a Mrs. Mitchell, came into camp. Mr. Mitchell, who was in charge of "Bob's Luck," reported that he had tried to carry out the instructions sent, and had succeeded in getting most of the mining plant under cover before the natives deserted. This they did at the very first opportunity, disappearing in the bush in every direction.

James Low, who was in charge of the "Wanderers' Rest," reported that the natives worked well and got all the mining material down a deep shaft, but when carrying the food stuff to a spot where the wagon had to pick it up, they waited a favourable opportunity, destroyed most of it, and disappeared in the bush. The above reports left no doubt in my mind as to the seriousness of our position. It appeared very plain that all the natives had an idea of what was going to happen.

Towards evening Harry Posselt, W. Lynch, and C. F. W. Nauhaus, farmers, who lived close to the Doro Mountains, about twelve miles away, came into camp and reported that fifty-six of their trek oxen had been looted during the previous night.

At 8 p.m. a meeting was held in the Belingwe Hotel, at which there were thirty-three present. This number was about ten men short of what we had estimated to be in the district at the time. Five of these we knew were at the "Sabie," twenty-five

miles distant, and could not possibly be in for another day. Two others were at a camp about three miles away, who pooh-poohed the idea of a native rising; the remainder we expected were on their way in. Some of the men present had walked in eighteen miles, and it was very gratifying to notice the readiness with which most of the men in the district had grasped the situation and come in at once, to give all the assistance they could. The meeting appointed me their chairman. I read Mr. Fynn's letter and explained all that had been done and what had actually happened during the day as far as my knowledge went.

As the commanding officer of the volunteers in the district addressing them, I said that I would at once place them on an active service footing. With regard to the burghers, it was explained to the meeting that they had been asked to concentrate solely for the purpose of protecting life and property, and that the camp, as far as they were concerned, was purely a voluntary one. I asked them

to do what they thought best, under the circumstances, and to co-operate with the volunteers, for the mutual defence of all. They unanimously agreed to place themselves under my command, and elected Sir Frederick Frankland to be their lieutenant and second in command.

A portion of the white men were then detailed to superintend the erection of the redoubts by about seventy natives, who had been brought into camp. The natives worked with a will when they were told the white men knew all about the rebellion, and that if any of them attempted to escape until the works were completed, they would be fired on. They were also informed they would be at liberty to go or stay with us as soon as the works were finished. The moon was just about two days from being full, and served us beautifully, and it was a stirring sight to see the natives hard at work, under the white guards, who, on this occasion, had a trying duty to perform, namely, to keep a look-out for a possible

enemy in front and treachery from the enemy employed within. By the time the moon went down, about 3 a.m. the following morning, the redoubts were so far advanced as to offer good cover for the defenders. The work was then stopped, the natives marched into the store paddock, and sentries were placed over them. A guard was mounted and sentries put on wherever it was considered the best positions were. The remainder of the white men laid down close to the earthworks, with their arms handy, and patrols were sent round the cattle kraals at intervals; but nothing of any importance happened. Thus, through the timely warning sent from Inseza by Mr. Fynn, most of the men in Belingwe were banded together and in a position to protect themselves and public property in less than twenty-four hours from the time the warning was received.

The Acting Native Commissioner and his assistant slept at their own camp, about a thousand yards from the position we had

fortified. When morning came they found the native police had built a bush scherm between their own quarters and those of their officers. This rather damped Mr. Jackson's belief in their loyalty. He came in and reported the matter, and then he and his assistant joined the other white men in garrison. The police were brought down and placed under cover of one of the forts, about a hundred yards away, but as several of them had faithfully carried the despatches entrusted to them, and had been the means of advising many of the white men, it was very difficult to decide what to do with them. They protested that they were not a party to the rebellion, and that they wanted to be faithful to the white men. They were strictly watched, but allowed to keep their arms.

All hands were kept busy during the 27th, putting the finishing touches to the forts and covering their approaches with a strong abattis made of the large hook thorn and other trees.

Towards the evening W. Sheldrake came into camp just as the men were being told off to their posts for the night. He reported that Stoddart's camp at the "Great Belingwe" mine had been looted by the rebels, and nineteen trek oxen were missing. He had had to run the gauntlet of the rebels' fire as he was on his way to the fort. Bergqvist, his comrade, had gone to look after the missing cattle. I felt very much annoyed with these men for not taking the timely advice sent to them, and acting in concert with the others. Had they done so their camp and cattle would have been saved, for they were the first men Vallentine saw on his way out. It was pure selfishness that kept them away from the other men, and when it was suggested that a party should be sent out to try and find Bergqvist, I did not think it was proper that any lives should be risked for him, seeing that he had had the best chances of any at first; and it was only when a party of volunteers came

to me on the morning of the 28th and said that they wished to go out and endeavour to find out what had happened to Bergqvist, that I agreed to let them go. I admired the sentiment that prompted the volunteers to go in quest of their comrade. The following men were allowed to depart, namely, W. R. Wilson, H. Posselt, Corporal Daniell, Corporal Le Vierge, H. Paulsen, and C. Paulsen. They were mounted on the best horses we had in the camp, and left about 6.30 a.m. They had not gone half an hour before Bergqvist came into camp and reported that on the evening of the previous day he had followed up the spoor of the missing cattle and come up with them before sundown. They were then being driven to the south-west by a large party of armed natives, who laughed at his vain endeavours to drive his cattle back, evidently enjoying his discomfiture. Although they were all armed, they did not attempt to hurt him, only driving the cattle along a little faster

and jeering at him when he gave up his efforts to recover his oxen. The patrol returned about 1 p.m., and reported that all the provisions at Stoddart's camp were destroyed and scattered over the veldt.

CHAPTER II

Continuation of defence works—Treachery and desertion of native police — Setting of dynamite mines — Troopers Posselt and Lynch volunteer to ride to Buluwayo with despatches — Are fired upon and compelled to return — Meeting in hotel as to advisability of shifting camp to Victoria — Departure of Troopers Lyle and Luckhurst to Victoria for ammunition and with despatches—Arrival of several men from outlying districts—Muster roll of garrison as on the 3rd of April, 1896.

THE defence works at the store were still being carried on and improved, and the men told off into two divisions—No. 1 division for No. 1 fort and No. 2 division for No. 2 fort. A guard was mounted at sunset, and six sentries posted round the laager. The native police were posted and had charge of the cattle, four hundred of which were kraaled about a hundred yards northwards from the laager. They also had a few sentries posted outside the white sentries.

This brings us to the evening of the 28th. Shortly after sundown two shots were fired by the police sentries. The white sentries at once retired on their forts, according to orders, and the forts were manned. Mr. Jackson and Mr. Wilson went immediately to find out what the native sentries had fired at. The sentries said they saw several Kaffirs moving about in front of their posts, and that they fired on them. Shortly afterwards the Native Commissioner and his assistant again went out to the cattle posts, and returned to report that all the native police, with the exception of three, had deserted, taking with them twenty rifles and ten rounds of ammunition per man. Not long after this several signals were heard by the white sentries near the cattle kraal. I then took out a patrol of eight white men, in skirmishing order, and got past the cattle kraal without finding anything in the shape of a nigger. The inside of the kraal was examined and

two natives were found hiding. They said they were hiding from the police, and, on being identified as herds, were allowed to join the other natives in the compound. I was under the impression that they were placed inside the kraal for the purpose of driving out the oxen when the proper moment came, but as our sentries were too much on the alert, the police had decided to go without the cattle for the time being.

The three native police who remained were disarmed, but they could, or would, give no information. Two days afterwards they were allowed to go out to bring in some mules from Posselt's farm, but, needless to say, they never returned.

I am quite sure that many people who may read this will think I was wrong from the beginning in not having the police arrested and disarmed. At the time I felt convinced I was wrong; but what otherwise could any one have done when everything is considered? First, a native policeman

A Group of Scouts.

brought us the warning; then, after they knew we were on our guard, they took our messages to isolated white men—some of whom were twenty-five miles away from our laager—and as we had no information from outside, I think it would have been very unfair to have treated them as rebels until they proved themselves such.

On the 29th we still went on strengthening our defences, the cattle kraal was moved close up to the laager, an abattis put right round the whole place, and several dynamite mines were set, to be fired by electricity Luckily my company had three strong electric batteries and any amount of wire and connections, which were of great utility under the circumstances.

This evening H. Posselt and W. Lynch, two of the troopers, who knew the country well, volunteered to try and get through, if possible, to Buluwayo with despatches, in order to let the authorities know we were all right in Belingwe, and to bring back all the information they could in regard to the

rebellion. They left after dark, mounted on two of our best horses, and returned on the morning of the 31st, just as the sun was rising.

They reported that they got as far as the Inseza, which is about fifty miles west of Belingwe, on the road to Buluwayo, and found that place deserted by all white men.

A small laager had been formed at Cummings' store, which had evidently been attacked. There were several dead bodies of natives lying about, but none of white men. The brick walls of one of the houses bore bullet-marks in many places. About three miles beyond Cummings' store they saw the bodies of a Kaffir woman and child, both disembowelled. As they approached the river, at the foot of the western slope of the Inseza hills, they were fired upon from the thick bush by a body of native police, who were evidently stationed to guard the drift. Posselt and Lynch were forced to return. It would have been useless to have gone further, as they would have been

overpowered. Luckily they got off clear—Posselt only losing his hat. We were all very pleased to see them back, and although they had failed to accomplish their object, we knew it was not their fault. The fact, however, of their not being able to get through made us think more seriously of the position we were in, and very anxious to know what was happening in other parts of the province.

Every morning and evening mounted patrols were sent out in different directions to watch the approaches, and patrols of Cape boys were sent up and down the river-beds every morning before the cattle were let out to graze.

On the same morning, the 31st, the mounted patrol caught a native hiding in the bush, about three miles from the fort, and brought him into camp. On being questioned, he said—

"I am one of the cattle herds, who ran away with the police from Belingwe. The police ran away because the Maholes had

raided Bergqvist's cattle. They went to Um'Nyati's. The police wanted me to go further with them, but I refused, and said I wished to return to my master, the Native Commissioner. At Um'Nyati's I heard that all the white men in Buluwayo were to be killed and also those at Inseza. I heard that the Impi was to kill all in Buluwayo first, and then come down this way and kill all here, and then on to Victoria. I also heard that ten white men had been killed at Inseza and that the others were in laager. I left here with four of us herd-boys and five police. I do not know who is supposed to be heading the rebellion. Um'Nyati's people are at their kraal. They are not armed. I ran away from the police in the daytime."

The information got from this boy proved how very serious matters were, and did not tend to make the men in the little garrison of Belingwe feel any more comfortable than they were before the lad arrived. In fact this information had quite the opposite

effect, and it was not long before I heard rumours that several of the more nervous men in laager had been discussing the advisability of moving the camp to Victoria.

I called a general meeting in the store, and explained to those present that I considered the position we held a very strong and safe one, and that it was the intention to continue strengthening it every day, and in doing so I would be glad to receive any suggestions from any one that might tend to that end.

With regard to the suggestion to move camp to Victoria, I said I was very sorry to think that there was any one present who had so little faith in himself or his comrades as to insult them by insinuating that they were not able to hold the position against anything in the shape of an Impi of savages, and that I was really surprised to learn that any of the men were becoming alarmed; that it appeared to me quite evident that the man who would advise the deserting of Belingwe did not know the difficulties that

lay before him on the way to Victoria. I further pointed out that we were strongly fortified, in a good position, with plenty of water and provisions to last at least three or four months. I also stated plainly that if any man, or section of men, thought it best to move, he, or they, were at perfect liberty to do so, but once away from the range of our forts they would have to look after themselves, and that so far as the volunteers and myself were concerned, we would stay where we were, or if we were forced to vacate we would take the road for Buluwayo, because it was much more easy to travel on than the one to Victoria.

I also had the pleasure of informing the meeting that two of their number, who knew the different ways to Victoria, had volunteered to try and get through, and bring about three thousand rounds of ammunition —the only thing we wanted to make our position absolutely secure.

The men were invited to speak their

minds freely and openly, and after considerable deliberation all agreed to remain where they were.

F. Luckhurst and W. Lyle, the two men who had volunteered to ride to Victoria for ammunition, left after dark on two good horses.

Just as the meeting ended, the signalman reported several white men coming in from the north. They were in the thick bush and evidently scouting the store. As soon as they saw white men moving about they came straight up, and we were very glad to welcome John, James, and Archie Cook, Walter Laidlaw, and C. C. Pike, from the "Sabie" district. The native policeman had delivered the message to them safely. They had started for the camp the following morning, coming slowly, and taking by-paths, in case of being surprised. They were all very tired and glad to get into camp.

On the 1st of April I had all the dynamite removed from the magazine, close to the

store, and put down a shaft, about one mile away.

On the 3rd of April, shortly after daybreak, the sentry reported the approach of a white man. This proved to be James Stoddart, who had, on learning the seriousness of the rebellion in Matabeleland, decided to come in from Victoria, in Mashonaland, to warn his men in the "Sabie" district. His horse broke down before he had got over the first thirty miles, and he had to walk the remaining fifty, doing the greater part of the distance at night. He was surprised when he reached the "Sabie" camps to find them deserted, but, nothing daunted, came on with the intention of warning Belingwe, not knowing that we had already been advised. When he came in he was very footsore, hungry, and soaking wet, having lain the greater part of the previous night in the bush, on a small rise, about a mile east of our position, watching for any signs as to whether the store was deserted, or inhabited by natives or whites.

He was very happy indeed when daylight came and he saw the white sentries on their posts and the place in a state of defence.

After he had partaken of some refreshment he made the following report :—

"When I left Fort Victoria there were about one hundred and twenty men, and sixty women and children in laager. They had between twenty and thirty horses, and provisions for all, to last about six weeks, and plenty of arms and ammunition. They were still in telegraphic communication with Buluwayo and Salisbury, and had received the following information *re* the rebellion. It was generally supposed that the rising was general throughout Matabeleland, and that one of Lobengula's sons was at the head of it. The headquarters of the rebels was in the Matopo Mountains. Several small patrols of white men had been sent out from Buluwayo to help in prospectors and others from the outlying districts. The leaders of these patrols were Spreckly, George

Grey, Gifford, Napier, and Selous. A large patrol of about four hundred men was being raised to go out and strike a decisive blow at the rebels, if possible, and the Chartered Company had ordered reinforcements from the Cape Colony of five hundred men, and Khama had offered his assistance. So far the telegraph wires had not been tampered with. About forty white men had been murdered so far as could be ascertained at present."

To us, in Belingwe, the information brought by Stoddart was most acceptable, because it showed us that, at all events, our comrades in other parts of the country were organising and defending themselves, and preparing to strike a decisive blow. Stoddart's report was read to a full-muster parade at 8.30 a.m., and he received the thanks of the garrison and three hearty cheers for his gallant endeavour to bring the tidings of danger to Belingwe. He was unanimously elected a Lieutenant, and taken on the strength of the garrison.

On the same parade the minutes of the first meeting were read to those who were not then present, and they were asked to decide whether or not they would join the garrison as effective members and stay under its protection. All agreed to serve, and forthwith joined the ranks.

The following is the muster-roll of the Belingwe garrison as it was on the 3rd of April, 1896 :—

		Nationality.
1.	Capt. D. Tyrie Laing	Scotland
2.	Sir Frederick Frankland, Bart....	England
3.	Lieut. James Stoddart	New Zealand
4.	Sergt. W. Lynch	Cape Colony
5.	„ M. McCallum	America
6.	„ A. J. Wilson	Scotland
7.	„ W. R. Wilson	Natal
8.	„ S. N. G. Jackson...	Cape Colony
9.	Corpl. Le Vierge	England
10.	Corpl. Daniell	Australia
11.	Trooper E. Vallentine	Scotland
12.	„ J. Low	Scotland
13.	„ W. C. Beaty Pownall ...	England
14.	„ A. D. Cameron	Scotland
15.	„ N. Posselt...	Natal
16.	„ C. Cremer...	Germany
17.	„ R. Douglas	America

		Nationality.
18.	Trooper G. G. Descalzie	Italy
19.	„ A. B. Inverdale	Scotland
20.	„ M. Huband	England
21.	„ P. Levine	Russia
22.	„ J. C. Mitchell	Cape Colony
23.	„ W. Miller	Scotland
24.	„ J. A. McGilvray	Scotland
25.	„ C. F. W. Nauhaus	Natal
26.	„ H. Posselt	Natal
27.	„ C. H. Paulsen	America
28.	„ H. Paulsen	America
29.	„ F. Luckhurst	England
30.	„ F. H. Snowdon	England
31.	„ S. Roodts	England
32.	„ W. K. Warham...	England
33.	„ W. Sheldrake	England
34.	„ J. C. Bushnell	Cape Colony
35.	„ R. Bergqvist	Sweden
36.	„ B. Yorke	England
37.	„ John Cook	Scotland
38.	„ James Cook	Scotland
39.	„ Archie Cook	Scotland
40.	„ Walter Laidlaw	Scotland
41.	„ C. C. Pike	England
42.	„ W. Lyle	Cape Colony
43.	Sergt.-Farrier W. J. Clifford	Australia
44.	Quartermaster F. J. Pope	England

And Mrs. J. C. Mitchell, wife of J. C. Mitchell, who was in charge of "Bob's Luck" mine.

To be added to the above, we had ten

Cape boys, who were armed and did duty with the white men, and very useful we found them. We had also fifteen Zambesi boys, who were used as cattle and horse guards by day.

CHAPTER III

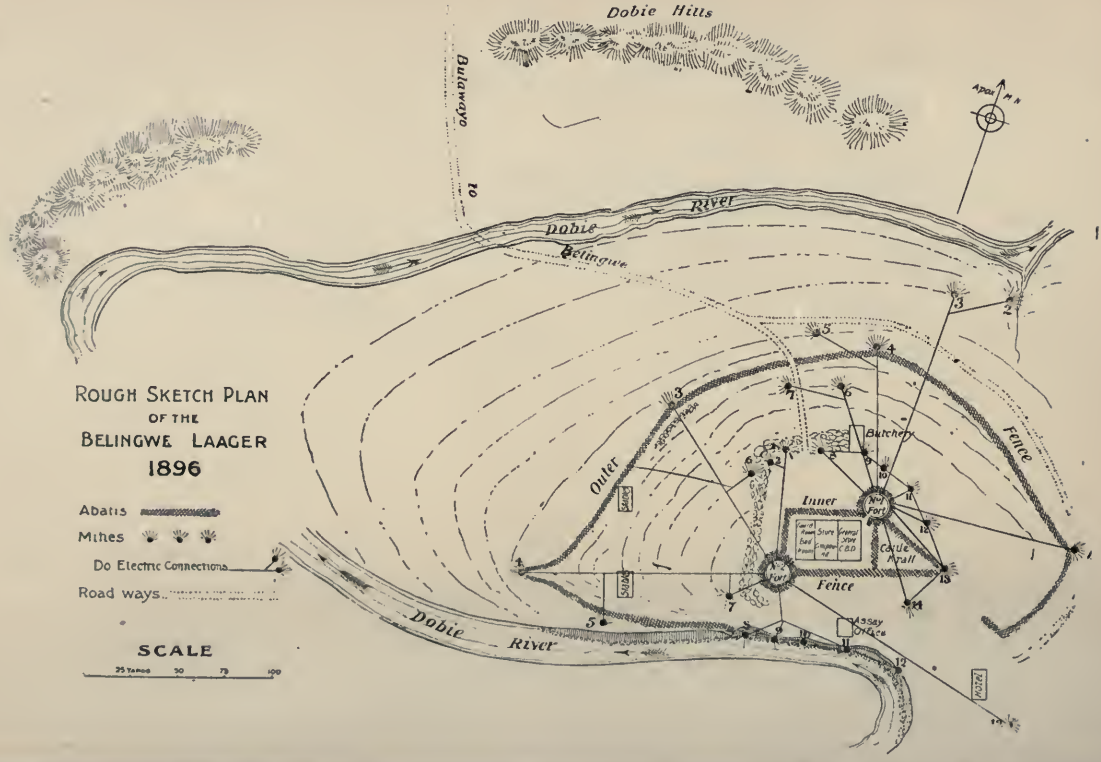
Capture of a native spy—Construction of automatic signal-gun—Setting of additional dynamite mines—Mounting guards and setting of night-watch—Arrival of despatch-bearers from Buluwayo—Return of Lyle and Luckhurst from Victoria—Supplies and cattle—Parade of natives.

ABOUT 8 p.m. on the evening of the 3rd Sergeant Lynch brought in a native prisoner, who had been caught inside our outer line of defence. I questioned him, and he willingly gave a glowing account of a journey he had just made from Buluwayo. He had left there only three days before with a message from W. Slade to his partner West, whom he expected to be in Belingwe, but, if not, he (the prisoner) was to proceed to Gondogue and deliver his message. He professed to be surprised at finding us in laager, and asked the reason why. He said the people in Buluwayo were

going about as usual, that so were the people at Bembesi, as he came past, and at the Inseza. He had heard there had been some slight disturbances among the Maholes at Inseza, but that the native police had put a stop to it. The self-confident effrontery with which the prisoner answered all the questions put to him might have put us off our guard had Lieutenant Stoddart's statement not been made before, but being in possession of that it was quite easy to discern we had a very bold spy to deal with. After putting a few questions as to Gifford's fight at Inseza and telling him that we knew what had taken place at Bembesi, and that the people in Buluwayo were in laager, he was slightly nonplussed, and went away quite dejected when he found that we did not believe his story and that his visit had proved futile.

From the time we had formed laager up to the present the general defence works had been continued daily, and the men were drilled twice a day as well.

The fact of natives being able to get through the outer fence and come close up to the forts without being noticed suggested the idea of an automatic sentry, in the shape of a signal-gun, which was erected forthwith on the top of the guard-room. It was connected with wires to the outer fence, which was divided into seven sections, each with an indicator, which dropped and fired a gun if anything attempted to force an entrance or pull away any of the bushes of which the fence was constructed. In about three days' time this automatic sentry worked so well that it was next to impossible to tamper in the slightest degree with any part of the fence or to get through it without first firing the signal-gun. In fact it worked so well, and we placed so much confidence in it, as to withdraw the seven sentries who were posted, previous to its erection, round the laager inside the outer fence. This proved a great boon to the men, and relieved them from a large amount of night duty, which had been very hard on them before, in


Dobie Hills
Dobie River
Belingwe
Outer
Inner
Fence
Butchery
Cattle Kraal
Assay Offices
Dobie River
ROUGH SKETCH PLAN
OF THE
BELINGWE LAAGER
1896
Abatis
Mines
Do Electric Connections
Road ways
SCALE
25 Yards 50 75 100

consequence of many of their number being down with fever, caused by hard work during the day and having to sleep in the earthworks at night.

After this the men in each fort divided the night-watch amongst them, which generally ran to about two hours for each man per night. Three men at a time were on duty, sitting up on the ramparts of the redoubts, facing in different directions, the only outside sentry being one on the river bank, about twenty yards from No. 2 redoubt. The automatic sentry was always on the alert, and considered it his duty to turn out the guard, if only to a jackal or wolf, should any of the latter, as they often did, attempt to come through.

The defence works had advanced so far now that most of the garrison had thorough confidence in being able to repel any attack the rebels in the district might make on the position. Besides the earthworks and bush fences, twelve dynamite mines had been laid to command positions where an attacking

force could get cover to concentrate before charging. These mines were attached by overhead wires to each fort, and operated by an electric battery, used for blasting purposes at the mines. We were the happy possessors of three such batteries, strong enough to explode a mine several miles away, and they were so arranged that one mine or all could be fired with one shock, if considered necessary. It gives me great pleasure to mention that the advent of the Cooks' coming into laager was a great piece of good fortune, for not only were they good shots and all-round men generally, but two of them, John and James, were qualified electrical engineers. To them the arrangement and setting of the mines was left, and they worked at them every day until in all they had twenty-seven placed round the laager in every available position. The system they adopted was so simple and complete that any of the men could have fired the mines as ordered without explanation.

It was considered advisable to mount

guard every evening about sundown, as was done before the automatic sentry was erected, for the sake of appearances, in case any of the rebel scouts might have been about and noticed our change of programme. There was a full parade of the garrison held at the same time, and the men were then marched to their posts and the redoubts manned. As soon as it was dark the night-watch was set and the sentries recalled.

On the evening of the 4th, when the men were on parade, the sentry on the look-out reported two horsemen approaching on the Buluwayo road. They were coming along very slowly, but gradually increased their speed as they got near to the fort. They proved to be two Cape boys sent on with despatches from Mr. Duncan, the Acting Administrator in Buluwayo. Mr. Duncan's despatch was very short. He trusted we were all right, and requested me to bury all the ammunition the men could not carry and march to Buluwayo as soon as possible.

The verbal message given to the des-

patch-riders was most consoling. They had been instructed to try and get to Belingwe, and if possible to try and recognise any of the dead white men, and cover them up if they had time and an opportunity.

The boys were very well treated and petted by the men of the garrison. They got ready and started on their homeward journey at 6 p.m. on the evening of the 5th. They had travelled mostly during the night on their way down, and intended doing the same going back. By avoiding the main paths and taking across country, they hoped to be able to get in all right. Every one wished them God-speed as they started on their adventurous journey, carrying a despatch from me to the Acting Administrator at Buluwayo, describing our position and showing the advisability of our remaining in possession of Belingwe.

The following extracts from the despatch above referred to may not be uninteresting to some readers :—

"We have eighteen men armed with Lee-Metfords and a good supply of ammunition for same. The rest of the men, with a few exceptions, are armed with Martini-Henrys, the supply of ammunition for which is, at present, limited to thirty rounds per man. We are expecting the return of the two messengers we sent to Victoria at any moment, but until they return it is, of course, impossible to leave.

"I have written to you at this length in order that you may thoroughly see our position and then decide whether you still wish us to march to Buluwayo. I should point out to you that in the event of us marching, in all probability the surrounding tribes will rise, thinking that this is a retreat. It will also be impossible for me to bring the cattle, and their gaining possession of these would strengthen the position of the rebels, as I hear that Um'Nyati, a neighbouring chief, is at present supplying arms and cattle to the Matebele.

"In my report which was sent to Victoria, and which I requested to be forwarded to the Acting Commissioner at Salisbury, I pointed out how highly undesirable I considered it to leave this position. The mere fact of our staying here (although the smallness of our numbers prevents us from taking the offensive) keeps a large number of natives from joining the main body of the rebels, and the geographical position is such that it would form a good base for the concentration of any troops, from either Victoria or the South, in which case we could give active support to Buluwayo operations, being near to Shamba and Filabusi. The country here is easy to travel, and the majority of the men are intimately acquainted with it. Had I thirty more men here, horsed and fully armed, I could send out patrols and keep this district secure. On the other hand, if the addition of our small force to those already in Buluwayo would be of service, I feel sure that the men under my com-

mand will cheerfully march in. In the latter case I do not consider it necessary that you should weaken your own strength by sending any patrol to escort us, as we would travel light.

"I am in hopes you have already received the news of our safety through Victoria, and think it might be advisable for you to cable to England the names of the men here and of their safety.

"I may also mention that sickness has prevailed in the camp, but am glad to say it is easing off.

"I must draw your attention to the fact that the value of private property at present in our charge in this laager is close on £10,000.

"I cannot close this letter without bringing under your notice the very able assistance I have received from Lieutenant Sir Frederick Frankland, who has from the beginning of my operations co-operated with me most willingly and cheerfully, sparing neither time nor trouble in the

daily work of the camp; also from Lieutenant Stoddart, who since he came into camp has rendered me much valuable assistance from his previous experience of former campaigns. I must also add that all the sergeants and corporals work faithfully and diligently, as well as the whole of the men, who are very loyal, turning out to their parades and drills without a murmur, and thereafter proceeding to the work detailed to them cheerfully."

The mere fact of our remaining in laager kept a large body of the rebels watching us, ready to rush for the spoil when we vacated, and equally ready to follow us up and harass us at every available opportunity which might offer itself. We were much better off in Belingwe than we should have been anywhere on our way to Buluwayo; in fact it would have been madness to have attempted to reach Buluwayo. I don't believe it would have been possible, even if all the men had been fit to march. As it was, ten of them were down with

fever, which would have compelled us to carry them in very slowly. This would have rendered our march all the more difficult, and I feel certain, had we been foolish enough to move, not a man would have reached Buluwayo. In any event we could not have gone until we had news from Lyle and Luckhurst; but luckily we had not long to wait for them. They turned up about 4.30 p.m. on the afternoon of the 6th, with 3,000 rounds of Martini-Henry ammunition and a despatch from Captain Vizard, who was in command of Victoria.

The despatch-riders made the following report, namely: That they left the Belingwe laager on the evening of the 31st of March, and got about twenty-five miles on their way to Victoria, when one of their horses broke down. They off-saddled for some time and went on again about 2 a.m. the following morning, and walked on to the east bank of the Lundi River, where they halted for a short

time, then walked on again to Goddard's store, and from thence to Meeks, the missionary's, expecting there to get a fresh horse, but as all his horses had been sent away they had to walk the greater part of the way, reaching Victoria on the 2nd of April, where they at once handed their despatches to Captain Vizard. They left Victoria on the 3rd with four horses and 3,000 rounds of Martini-Henry ammunition. At sunset on the evening of the 5th they reached the Sand River, and off-saddled their horses to give them a rest till the moon rose. The horses were knee-haltered, and Lyle had just started to gather some firewood, when two lions made for, and scattered them. Lyle, as soon as he saw what had happened, made for the horses, and succeeded in catching two of them. These Luckhurst held, whilst Lyle again went after the other two for some distance, but did not get up to them. They had stampeded on the road back to Victoria. The lions did not give chase but hung around

the spot where the other horses were ; that they cooked some food and coffee, and waited until the moon rose, and then put all the ammunition on to the two remaining horses and resumed their march on foot, between 2 and 3 a.m., getting to Belingwe about 4.30 the same afternoon. The natives they met on their way were Mashonas, and at that time friendly.

At 5.30 p.m. a full parade was held, and the despatches which had been forwarded by Captain Vizard, were read to the men. Those from the Administrator contained a brief account of all he knew about the rebellion, its supposed cause, the efforts then being made to put it down, and concluded with congratulations to myself and the garrison of Belingwe for holding our own, giving me an entirely free hand to do what was considered best, either to hold the position or retire on any other one, until the Government were in a position to send us aid.

When the men were dismissed they

cheered the two despatch-riders heartily, and praised them for the plucky manner in which they managed to get the ammunition through. The men, having now plenty of ammunition, felt more confident than ever of holding their own, and were very anxious to get out and try to have a brush with any straggling parties of the enemy who might be about, but, further than the ordinary patrols, I would not consent to any party going out to look for adventure. We all knew very well that our position was closely watched during the day from a hill called Fondoque, about one and a half miles from our laager. The camp fires of large parties could be seen at night about eight miles to the north of our position, and often the ashes of a small fire were discovered at the back of one of the hills close up to the forts by the morning patrols. This proved that the scouts of the rebels were always on the prowl. My plan was to leave them alone, until they got tired of waiting for us to vacate our position, and I concluded

that then they would be sure to come and try to rush us out of it. I was very much averse to small parties going more than a mile or two from the laager, in case they might get cut off by a large body of the enemy, whose favourite mode of fighting is, if possible, to surround isolated bodies with overpowering numbers and annihilate them. I often had to tell the men, when they came to me for permission to go out, that they had only to wait until the enemy got tired of watching us doing nothing, then they would have plenty to do. We could not afford to lose a man until they made their attack. When that came off we should want all our strength, and that behind the walls of the redoubts and mines, for I fully expected them to attack our position in great strength.

By this time the defences were as far advanced as was really necessary, and the men had little to do during the day except their inlying picquet, the sentry of which was posted on a platform erected on the

top of the large iron store, and a commanding position, from which a very good view of the surrounding country was obtainable, especially with the aid of a very good pair of field-glasses, which were commandeered for the purpose from Trooper Snowdon. The only other duties were the ordinary camp fatigues, bringing in wood, &c. The water was pumped up from the river every evening, and three iron tanks, four feet square each, were always kept full. So far as rations were concerned my garrison was very well off. There was an abundant supply of bread stuffs, and we had a large troop of cattle, over four hundred head, to start with, many of them being young Matabele oxen, most of them in good condition, and, as good luck would have it, the dreaded rinderpest had not reached them. We had also sixteen horses, twelve of which were in very good condition and up to despatch-riding on an emergency. We had a plentiful supply of mealies for them, with good grazing along the banks of the river,

A Group of "A" Troop.

just under cover of the guns. The only thing the men wanted was work, or some excitement to break the monotony of a garrison life. The despatch from the Administrator had set our minds at rest as to the ultimate end of the rebellion, and knowing the worst had happened with the murders at Inseza and other parts, any anxiety we had felt for the security of Buluwayo and other towns was dispelled when we knew that our comrades were organised and holding their own, at least, against the rebels.

As soon as the heaviest works were completed, principally for the purpose of saving our provisions as much as possible, and to get rid of what would have proved a very dangerous element in our midst in case of an attack, and likewise for the purpose of carrying and explaining a proclamation to the neighbouring tribes, it was decided to parade all the natives who had been kept to assist in erecting the fortifications, and explain to them that their services were no longer required, that they were at

liberty to go home if they wished, or to stay with us if they were afraid to do so. Native Commissioner Jackson and his assistant accordingly paraded the natives, explained the position, and gave them to distinctly understand that they were at full liberty to go or stay, but that those who elected to go, if found about the camp after that night, would be treated as rebels, and that those who elected to stay would have the protection of our laager as long as they deserved it, but if any of them were found attempting to escape, or holding communication with any natives outside, they would be treated as spies. About seventy boys decided to leave at once, and about twenty-five decided to remain.

Knowing the localities from which most of the boys came, we were in a position to judge of the loyalty, or otherwise, of their kraals, and we came to the conclusion that there were very few loyal natives to the west, south, or north of us. The natives who had decided to go were instructed to

inform all the people in the districts they passed through that if any of them wished to communicate with us, they were to advance along the main roads unarmed, but that if any of them were found in the bush near our position they would be treated as spies and shot, unless they could prove they were there for a purpose friendly to us.

CHAPTER IV

An alarm—Capture of a spy—Court-martial and sentence—Desertion of three natives—Attack by Matabele—Engagement and recovery of cattle—Treachery of natives in camp—Trial and sentence on three—Remaining natives expelled from the camp.

ON the evening of the 9th, shortly after dark, the night-watch had not been set, and most of the men, except the flying sentries and guard, were at their evening meal, when the sentry on the river post challenged rapidly, and then alarmed the forts. Captain Frankland and myself happened to be in our mess-room, quite close to the post. We both rushed out to ascertain what was likely to happen. The sentry reported that he had seen several Kaffirs crawling along, under cover of the fence of the cattle kraal, and pointed out the position. By this time every man was at his post and all ready. Mr. Jackson, Captain Frankland,

and myself went up to the place indicated, with our revolvers ready, but at first could not see anything. The bottom of the fence was under shadow and very dark. By mere chance I happened to observe something move close to my foot, and ordered it to stand up. It proved to be a Kaffir, whom we at once laid hold of. At the same time several others jumped up and ran off, taking good care to run between the men in the forts and ourselves, thereby preventing us from using our firearms, for fear of shooting each other. They got under cover of the shadow, and the next thing we heard of them was from the Cape boy sentry, Hans, challenging and firing. Immediately afterwards the signal-gun on top of the guard-room went off. This was caused by the runaways breaking through the outer fence and disturbing the signal wires. The alarm was complete by this time; even the sick men were in the forts, with their rifles ready for action. The last we heard of the runaways that night was when they got about five hundred

yards away. They then commenced to signal by whistling, which was answered from several directions, showing clearly that there were others of the same tribe about. Then all was quiet.

The runaways left their arms where they were first discovered. The following morning the prisoner was tried by court-martial. At first he would not give any evidence either in favour of himself or against his confederates. On being asked if he knew he had forfeited his life, he said, "I know that, and am sorry you caught me. I came from Wedza's, and so did those with me. He was going out to meet some more of his men. Wedza wishes to take away all cattle. Other Kaffirs leave your laager at night with information, and some do it through the day. I have been very unlucky. There are a lot of our people watching Belingwe, to get it when you white men are all dead. There will be quite enough of them to eat up all of you white men." The prisoner was condemned and shot.

Whilst the men were at their midday meal three other natives broke away and got off. They were not fired on. The Cape boys tried to run them down, but failed. It was not worth while sending horsemen after them. I would have been very glad if they had all gone, for it was impossible to tell whether they were spies or loyal. The mere fact of the natives trying to go off in this manner led us to believe that they knew something of importance was likely to happen soon and they did not want to be with us when it did take place. This made every one more alert than ever, and several shots were fired the following evening by the flying sentries, but most probably at wolves or jackals. The signal-gun also went off on the night of the 11th, but I was unable to ascertain the cause.

Sunday, the 12th of April, like all our Sundays, was a lazy day—no drills or fatigues to do by either whites or blacks—and was spent by most of us with a book or some other amusement to pass time. Very

probably the Sunday's midday meal was a heavier one than those of other days, and I daresay that by 2 p.m. most of the men not on duty were taking a siesta. Sir Frederick Frankland and myself were preparing to do the same at about 2.30 p.m. when the sentry on the look-out alarmed the garrison and reported that the cattle posts were being driven in by a large body of Kaffirs. We at once jumped to the ramparts of the nearest redoubt and saw that the sentry's report was too true. The cattle had been grazing about a thousand yards to the south of our position, close to some small hills, thickly covered by bush, and at first sight these hills seemed to be one mass of Kaffirs, all rushing towards the cattle. Sergeant McCallum and Corporal Paulsen at once got out the two emergency horses, which were always kept ready saddled and bridled, and rode off to assist the cattle guard. They did very good work on their horses until we were able to get the other horses in and saddled up. Luckily they happened to be close by, as we had had

them driven into the laager every day at noon and let out again at 2 p.m. They were in, saddled up, and mounted in less than five minutes. By this time there was quite a fusilade going on all round our south and west front, and the bullets were whizzing high over the forts. All the dismounted men, sick included, were in the forts. Leaving Captain Frankland in charge, with instructions to keep a sharp look-out to the north and east, and to commence fire at once if any of the enemy showed up in those directions, to draw our attention to the laager in case of a general attack, I rode off with nine mounted men to assist the cattle guards. By this time the rebels had succeeded in breaking up the cattle into small herds and stampeded them away to the east and south. When we came up to where Sergeant McCallum and Corporal Paulsen were, they pointed out the direction in which the largest body were driven. This was done when we were going at a good hand-gallop and under a heavy fire from the surrounding hills at

the back of the police camp. The line, in skirmishing order, wheeled to the left, and went straight for the rebel fighting line, those in front breaking away before a shot was fired at them; but the horsemen soon got close up and shot a few from their saddles. As the hill at the police camp was passed three men halted, took cover, and returned the fire of the rebels, who at once left their position and retreated rapidly to the north. Lieutenant Stoddart, with two men, did the same, whilst the men in the centre came on with me to an open flat which was immediately in our front. As soon as we cleared the bush we saw several herds of cattle only a hundred yards or so in front of us being driven as hard as they could go, but as they were being driven away from their usual grazing ground they were trying to break back again. When the men with me saw the position they all seemed to yell at once, and this drew the attention of the rebels in front on to us. They evidently had never thought that the

white men would attempt to get through their fighting line, and as soon as they saw us coming down on them they became a confused mass, fired off their rifles in every direction, at anything or nothing, and made for the dense bush, about five hundred yards in front of them, as hard as they could go. Before they got to it we were well in amongst them, and had a certain amount of satisfaction before we retired from a heavy fire which was opened on us from the bush already mentioned. By this time Lieutenant Stoddart, with the men who remained behind to watch the flanks, came up, and a few more shots were fired by ourselves into the bushes. Whilst this was going on I had time to look up and down the valley, and for a mile on each side the rebels could be seen retreating as hard as they could for the bush in front of us. Presently the order was given from a hill about two hundred yards in advance of us for the rebels to concentrate. I then thought it advisable to retire, with the cattle we had recaptured,

as quickly as possible, to the forts, from which we had not heard any firing worthy of mention. As soon as we commenced to retire the bush and hillsides, which we had just left in our rear, got quite animated, and a brisk but very harmless rifle fire was sent after us, some of the rebels being so anxious to get in their shots that they were firing from the top of the Fondoque hill, a good mile away. We succeeded in getting back to the forts with 190 cattle, out of about 380 head, and during the night a lot of milch cows came back to their calves. We lost about one-half of what we had that morning and most of the young cattle were taken by the rebels.

When we got back, which we did without further trouble and no loss on our side, our comrades had been having a very anxious and excitable time. They had heard and seen most of the firing, and had a lot of shots over them, but only got in a few in return. They could not open fire while we were in sight, and when we got out of sight

they had chances but did not take them, because we might have been in their line of fire. However, they did their duty, and were delighted to see us all come back again. Captain Frankland was on the platform on top of the roof of the store all the time, and had a splendid view of the whole affair until we got behind the hill at the police camp.

The natives in our laager were most effusive with their congratulations, which were cut short by one of the white men reporting that he saw several of them signalling in the direction of the cattle shortly before the attack commenced. He watched to see who they were signalling to, but saw nothing but cattle herds, and concluded at the moment that they were signalling to some of them to come home for food. They were all ordered into the compound, and those that had been guilty of signalling pointed out. On being questioned, one said he came from M'Posi's; another, who had evidently lost his presence of mind, said he

came from Godhlwayo, as also did the other two. They admitted that this boy had told the truth—the three of them came from Godhlwayo and knew and were connected with the rebels—Godhlwayo being the place where the rebellion originated. They were all tried, condemned, and shot. After this every native in the laager, except those that came from the Zambesi, Cape Colony, or Natal, was turned out of it at once. They all went willingly, except one very big Basuto, who said he would rather be killed by us than by the rebels; he was an utter stranger among them, knew nothing of the rebellion, and was an enemy to their race. He was allowed to stay, and was very faithful all through.

The men of the garrison had now something to talk about for the next few days. The monotony that had bored us all was broken up for a time, and we were all rather glad we had got our first big job over, and watched, more keenly than before, for the next.

The rebels at the first onset fought well for the cattle. McCallum and Paulsen shot three of them before we came up. One horrid-looking old witch-doctor was at the head of the attacking party. At first he had only a battle-axe and charms, and laughed at the white men, saying they could not harm him, and that they had no shot that could kill him. He had three bullets before he dropped. After that his followers seemed to lose a lot of their dash and became rather an easy prey for us for a short time. I have little doubt that had we been foolish enough to go on they would have made a new plan and attacked us again.

The Zambesi boys, who were with the cattle, behaved very well, and did their utmost to save them until we came out to their assistance, by heading them off towards camp. One of them, through force of habit I suppose, or perhaps to show his zeal, marched into the laager, whilst the fight was at its hottest, with a week-old

calf on his back. Another one was missing after the fight and put down as dead. Some of the white men went out with his brothers to look for his body where he was last seen, and found it after a long search, in the bottom of a dry water creek, covered up with grass. They had some difficulty in getting it out. When, however, they did, and it found it was in the hands of friends, the body came to life again, and by the time the camp was reached the supposed dead one was quite lively.

One of the rebels, who had his position on the top of the hill close to the police camp, seemed to have charge of a rifle of no ordinary calibre. He directed all his fire over the laager, and at regular intervals of about five minutes sent a missile over the heads of its defenders. This practice, after a while, became rather amusing to some, irksome to others, and frightened a few. Corporal Paulsen informed me it took three men to work this

A Group of "D" Troop.—Cape Boys.

gun, and whilst they were in the act of loading it the last time he shot one of their number, the other two immediately decamping, taking the piece with them.

CHAPTER V

Strong patrol goes out—Discoveries on recent battlefield—Arrival of despatch-bearers from Victoria—An alarm—Despatch-bearers come in contact with large body of Matabele and narrowly escape—Accident to a trooper—Deaths of Trooper Bergqvist and Mrs. Mitchell—Fever in camp—Death of Beaty-Pownall—Lieutenant Stoddart and Trooper Posselt volunteer to ride to Buluwayo with despatches—Arrival of despatches from Mr. Rhodes.

ON the morning of the 13th, with the strongest mounted patrol we could muster, I went out in hopes of being able to gather some information as to the direction the rebels had taken, or whether they were still about, and also to bring back any stray oxen we might drop across. On the previous afternoon, shortly after the fight, a very severe thunderstorm passed over the district, drenching everything and obliterating all tracks of the rebels and cattle, and making it impossible for us to get any

information as to their movements. The patrol made a big detour and came round by Stoddart's camp, "The Great Belingwe," down past "McPhee's camp," home along the "Bob's Luck" road, and across the field where we had the skirmish the previous afternoon. I then understood, for the first time, that the rebels had got a greater fright than we thought. For a mile beyond the point where we left off pursuit the veldt bore evidence of their very hasty retreat. Blankets, great-coats, food, and arms had been dropped, to enable the owners to run with more freedom to the friendly cover of the bush-clad hills. They had been so thoroughly surprised that they did not dare to venture into the open to get back their property, even at night. They even left their dead on the field, a thing I had never known the natives of Matabeleland to do before when there was the least possible chance of getting the bodies away. Among the articles they abandoned were several police great-coats and bandoliers, full of

ammunition, blankets, and provisions. Each man had evidently carried about from 5 lb. to 6 lb. of raw meat and about 5 lb. of mealies. All the dead had a piece of ox-fat tied to their throats. This I afterwards learned was fat taken from oxen killed by the "M'limo" and given to each man, after it had been "Umtigatied" (bewitched), to render the man impervious to harm from the bullets of the white man. Amongst the dead left on the field was the before-mentioned witch-doctor, dressed up in all the paraphernalia necessary for his calling, and a most hideous brute he looked, even in death, which, as a rule, modifies the expression on the face of most natives.

During the forenoon of the 14th two of Chebi's boys arrived with a despatch, dated the 8th, from Captain Vizard, Victoria. The following information was obtained from these boys :—

"We were given the letter by the white chief at Victoria, and were told to try and get here with it and to find out whether the

white men were alive or dead. We have been seven days on the road. We have had to come slowly and carefully, because it is difficult to tell who are friends or foes. Most of the way we travelled at night. At Marandella's kraal we were told that the natives of this district were banding together to immediately attack Belingwe. The chiefs Wedza, Buschelli, Mapanzula, Mazezeteze, Impopote, and Senda have risen, and are being led by a band of Matabele from Godhlwayo, who are headed by Maduna, the son of Marqua, Lobengula's sister. These forces are located somewhere between Wedza's and the Bungwe Mountain, and their instructions are to wipe out Belingwe. The attack was to have taken place some days ago, during the afternoon. All the cattle which have been stolen from the farmers in this district have been taken to the Matopos, by way of Shamba. A great many of the Matabele women and children are hidden away in the Impatini Mountains. The Impi that is gathering here has instruc-

tions to march on Victoria as soon as they have wiped out Belingwe, and treat that place in like manner before returning. These are the orders of the 'M'limo,' who lives in the Matopos. We do not know the strength of the attacking force, but Maduna has about three hundred Matabele with him, and his party have been killing white men all over the country by Inseza and Filabusi. Um'Nyati has not left his kraal, but all his men are armed. The only chiefs who are remaining faithful are Chebi's and those between him and Victoria. Indeema has destroyed all the white men's houses, &c., at Selukwe."

The boys could give little more information, and expressed a wish to be allowed to depart as soon as possible. They said they did not consider Belingwe a safe place when an Impi was ready to attack it. They were then informed the place had been attacked two days previously and the rebels beaten off. This information surprised them a little, and they advised us strongly to march

for Victoria before the rebels had time to re-form and make another attack. They were quite sure we were mad to stay any longer when we had a chance of getting away.

A despatch was written and handed to them, and they left at 4.30 p.m. About half an hour after their departure the inlying picquet gave the alarm and reported the rapid approach of several natives and a considerable shouting from others in the bush behind the police camp. The cattle and horses were at once turned into the laager, the forts manned, and several shots fired close to the approaching natives, two of whom at once showed friendly signs by holding their hands up. The remainder disappeared into the bush. Our horsemen advanced to meet the natives, and found that they were the despatch-bearers, who reported that they came into contact with a large body of Matabele, some of whom had on police great-coats. They were evidently examining the ground over which the

skirmish took place. When they noticed the despatch-bearers they gave chase, and pressed them so hard that the boys had to throw away their blankets, in one of which the despatches were rolled up. They were rewritten, and the boys left again after dark by another route.

The presence of the Matabele increased our anxiety, and every precaution was taken to repel an attack, if necessary, during the night, all the men sleeping at their stations, but nothing occurred.

On the 15th a boy came in from Gondoque with a letter from a Mr. Carruthers to Mr. Lyle, asking him to forward a rifle and ammunition, and asking for information. Gondoque is about seventy miles south of Belingwe. To have given the boy a rifle and ammunition meant giving it to the rebels, so he left with a letter only, to Carruthers, telling him to try, if possible, to reach Victoria direct, from where he was, as M'Tipi's natives were friendly. He succeeded in getting to Victoria.

Nothing of any consequence happened until Sunday, the 19th, at 12.30 p.m., when it was reported to me that Trooper W. C. Beaty-Pownall had been shot by accident. Trooper Roodts had taken up Sergeant McCallum's Winchester repeater, and was showing the action to some comrades, when the rifle went off. The bullet, grazing the back of Trooper Yorke's left hand, entered the left leg of Beaty-Pownall on the inside, and, travelling obliquely down, passed out on the other side. I at once set to and stopped the bleeding, bandaged the leg up in splints, and had Pownall placed inside the airiest room in the large store. I then asked if there was any one among the men who knew anything about surgery, but found I was the only one present who had even been taught in that line, and I am very sorry to say that the short course of field surgery that I went through whilst at Gibraltar was not sufficient to enable me to save the life of this brave young man. Had he been shot in action on the previous Sunday, when

he did brilliant service, his case would not have been so hard, but to be laid out by an accident was too bad. He was a splendid fellow, and a great favourite in the garrison. The first thing he did, after being put to bed, was to pray that his unfortunate comrade who caused the accident should not be punished in any way; and his wish was adhered to.

Next Sunday, the 26th, Trooper Bergqvist died. He had been suffering from fever for some time previous, but on that morning he reported to me that he felt all right again. He had a cup of bovril and a little meat at lunch, and shortly afterwards he was observed by Sergeant W. R. Wilson outside his wagon retching and gasping. Sergeant Wilson sent at once for myself and Lieutenant Stoddart, but Bergqvist expired before we could assist him. Death apparently resulted from suffocation.

That same day Mrs. Mitchell, wife of J. C. Mitchell, contractor, died. She had been ailing for some time, and fever had

weakened her considerably. The shock she got on hearing of Bergqvist's sudden death upset her nervous system entirely, and she never recovered. Sunday seemed to be the special day for great misfortunes, since for three running we had had fighting, accident, and now two deaths. These facts did not tend to make the life in our little camp very cheerful, and I believe I felt the position as keenly as any one, and looked anxiously every day for the relief. Fever again had set in among the men, and sometimes as many as seventeen were unfit for duty. With no doctor present this was very unpleasant, and it was rendered doubly so by the constant growling of some of the more selfish of the men.

On the morning of Monday, the 27th, Robert Bergqvist and Mrs. Mitchell were buried in a small clearing about a hundred yards from the fort.

On the 28th, I am sorry to say owing to the growing discontent amongst a certain class of the men, I had to parade the whole

and warn them that if any one was found deliberately shirking his duty, or in any way trying to upset the discipline of the garrison, they would be put back for a court-martial and tried as soon as any strange officers came into camp, and I warned them of the penalties.

On the morning of the 28th Beaty-Pownall asked me to amputate his leg. I had looked after him as well as I could, and cleansed and bandaged the wound twice daily. Everything else that could be done by his comrades was cheerfully fulfilled. From the beginning I was certain a doctor would have amputated the leg at once, and was in hopes that, as I had in several despatches asked for a doctor, one might turn up at any minute. But as day after day went past without bringing the required aid, I knew from the outward appearance of the leg that poor young Pownall had not long to live. When he asked me to cut off his leg I felt certain he also knew what was likely to happen. I formed a board, composed of Captain Frankland, Lieu-

tenant Stoddart, and Orderly-room Sergeant A. J. Wilson, to examine Pownall, and decide what was to be done. In their presence he proposed the amputation of his leg. The board asked him if he fully understood what he proposed, and whether he thought he could stand the operation. He answered that he thought he would, and begged that it might be done, to give him the last chance. He said he knew the lower part of his leg was dead, and that his life could only be saved by cutting it off. The board decided the amputation should take place. It was performed at once, and apparently successfully, the patient bearing up very well all the time. For the next two days he appeared to be recovering, the leg healing nicely, but on the morning of May 2nd he succumbed, without pain; having slept well the previous night, he never awoke. This was one of the heaviest blows our little garrison had to sustain. Beaty-Pownall was buried with military honours, beside the other victims of the rebellion.

On the 1st of May Lieutenant Stoddart and Trooper H. Posselt volunteered to try and ride through to Buluwayo, with despatches and bring back information as to the general disposition of the rebels and whites, we at Belingwe being entirely ignorant of the true position and very anxious to ascertain what had been done, or was likely to be done, to reduce the rebels.

Stoddart and Posselt left with three of our best horses, to try a hazardous ride, at 12.15 midnight. It is always safest to travel at night and avoid the main footpaths and hide during the day when dealing with natives on the warpath.

May 4th brought two boys with despatches from Victoria—one from Mr. Rhodes in answer to mine of the 14th ultimo, thanking me, and congratulating the men of the Belingwe garrison for the determined stand they had made against the rebels, and finished by saying that he (Mr. Rhodes) would be glad to assist in every way, and adopt any sug-

gestions we could send him, and that he would very probably be close to Gwelo by the 10th. This was the most pleasant and interesting information we had yet received, for we all knew Mr. Rhodes would keep his word, and that relief would soon be sent if possible. The despatch-bearers also brought the following information in regard to the rebellion :—

That they had heard of several big fights between the white men and the rebels, near Buluwayo, in which the white men had always got a little the best of the battle. They also heard that we had defeated the Godhlwayo Impi when they attacked us. That the rebels reported that they took away all our cattle, killed nearly all our horses and four white men during the engagement. (This was the sort of reports the rebels always kept circulating in order to incite the lukewarm ones to rise.) That the Impi was now in Belingwe, camped close to the main road near Senda's kraal. That

they did not intend to attack again, but only to keep a close watch on the road and cut off any small parties of whites, and keep up communication between M'Patini and the Matopos. That M'Patini was full of unreaped grain, which the rebels wanted for food. That the Impi was composed of ten scherms of about fifty men each. That Echlolodhlo was now the Induna in command and Endende was second in command, and that Maduna had gone to the Matopos.

CHAPTER VI

Departure of native runners with despatches to the O. C. Victoria and Mr. Rhodes—Narrow escape of two Cape boys sent to Gwelo—Lieutenant Stoddart and Trooper Posselt get to within twelve miles of Buluwayo—Are hotly pursued and compelled to return—Arrival of Captain Hopper's relief party from Victoria—Native runners bring important despatches from Mr. Rhodes.

THE despatch-bearers left again the following morning at daybreak with the following despatches for the Officer Commanding Fort Victoria, and for Mr. Rhodes :—

"FORT BELINGWE,
"*May* 4, 1896.

"SIR,—I have the honour to inform you that your despatch dated 28th April arrived here this morning.

"All the men here are very pleased to know that their services are appreciated by Mr. Rhodes, yourself, and others, and

send their sincere thanks for congratulations.

"*Re* reinforcements.—Unless it is intended by the authorities to take active steps against the enemy in this district, it is not necessary to send reinforcements. I believe that the present garrison is capable of holding this position against 2,000 rebels if they give us the chance. I don't suppose they will ever be in a position to send the above number against us.

"I enclose a copy of my last despatch to Buluwayo, also a copy of a statement made by a Matabele spy caught by our cattle guard. We had great difficulty in getting any information out of him. At first he pretended to be a fool, and it was only when he found out that he was a prisoner, and to be treated as a spy, that he came to his senses.

"I also enclose a letter for Mr. Rhodes, contents of which please wire to him, as well as the Belingwe despatch and your own letter.

"*Re* ammunition.—We are still well supplied, but if not inconvenient to you, could do very well with a few thousand rounds of M.-H. and Lee Speed. We are not strong enough to send for them.

"Very sorry to have to report the death of W. C. Beaty-Pownall, from the effect of bullet wound, on Sunday the 2nd inst. I have the honour to be, &c.

"(Signed) D. TYRIE-LAING,
"Capt. Commanding Belingwe.
"To H. HOPPER,
"Capt. Commanding Victoria."

"FORT BELINGWE,
"*May* 4, 1896.

"C. J. RHODES, ESQ., Gwelo.

"DEAR SIR,—I have the honour to inform you that your wire dated 21/4/96 got here this morning, with despatch-bearers from Victoria.

"The men of the garrison wish me to convey their thanks for your kind recognition of their services, and all trust that you will

give them the chance of reducing the rebels of this district to proper order, when you have had time to make your arrangements.

"I have enclosed a copy of the despatch forwarded to the Administrator at Buluwayo on the evening of the 30th ult. Very probably you have already had it wired to you from Buluwayo. You will see by it that I think a good patrol working in this district would help, to a considerable extent, to put down the rebellion. Knowing that men and horses are very scarce I asked for thirty mounted men only. If reinforcements are being brought from the south I think it would be better to send them to Belingwe, which appears to me to be a more convenient base, under the present circumstances, than Victoria, as it is one hundred miles closer to the strongholds of the enemy, it would save the marching of men to Victoria, and the counter-marching of them to Belingwe, and prove a great saving of time and energy.

"The wagon road from Gondoque to

Belingwe leaves the Victoria road about two miles on the Victoria side of the middle drift road, and was made last year by a road party formed by my company. Mr. Lyle came along it from Gondoque, about a month ago, and reports it in good order. The only difficult part is about twenty miles south of Belingwe Peak, where a very nasty pass, through the granite formations, has to be got through. This pass is about four miles long, but only difficult at one point, which is an elbow about thirty yards long. The pass is not half so difficult as the Mangwe pass, which you will remember. The distance from Gondoque to Belingwe fort is about sixty-five or seventy miles by the wagon road. The distance from Gondoque to Victoria is about ninety-three miles, from Victoria to Belingwe about ninety miles, making a total of 183 miles. Any party coming from the south to operate in the field would save 120 miles by coming direct to Belingwe. Should it be considered advisable to order a party by the route

suggested I would advise them not to come to Belingwe fort, but to take up a position on the open flats to the south of Belingwe Peak, where they would be clear of all bush, and have lots of water and grass for their horses and cattle. They would also be in command of the main line of communication between Godhlwayo and M'Patini. If you send in a party, my men, who are thoroughly acquainted with this section of Matabeleland, from here to Gwanda, and all the intervening country to Buluwayo, will be found very valuable as scouts.

" If you don't consider it advisable to send a small force through this way from the south, and can spare a small, well-mounted patrol from either Gwelo or Victoria, I feel certain they will do very good service.

" From Gwelo to Belingwe is about ninety miles, and the best road is *viâ* Selukwe, and then on to the Belingwe road, from there to Wedza mountain, which is about eighteen miles from here. Most of the Selukwe men

would be able to point out the road, which is comparatively easy. There are no difficulties on the road between Victoria and Belingwe."

(By this time the loyalty of Chebis and his men was assured and the road was safe.)

"If you do send a patrol and can spare a small field-gun it would be of great service.

"Any small patrol, of say fifty, coming from Victoria, or Selukwe, could travel light, and get provisions here, to serve until other arrangements can be made. It might be advisable to send an officer, junior to myself, in charge, but it is all the same to me. I wish to do what I can for the best, under any circumstances.

"If active measures are not intended in this district and I can be of service elsewhere I shall be very glad. Trusting that success is being met with by your patrols everywhere,

"I am, &c.,

"D. TYRIE-LAING,

"O. C. Belingwe.'

To make doubly sure I decided to send off two despatch-riders, on horseback, to meet Mr. Rhodes at Gwelo. Two Cape-boy drivers volunteered to go. Harry Pick, a very reliable and intelligent boy, knew the road well, and also several bypaths. He and September, his comrade, were mounted on two good horses, and left after dusk. They got through in three days, but had a hard struggle, and were all but captured by the rebels close to Selukwe. Being mounted, however, they managed to get away, after shooting seven of the fleetest and most persistent of the rebels.

On the same night at 11 p.m. Lieutenant Stoddart and H. Posselt returned to laager. They reported that they got to the coach stables at Thabas Induna at 8 a.m. on the 2nd inst., where their advance was stopped by a large body of Kaffirs, mostly armed with rifles, who at first attempted to encircle them. That they (Stoddart and Posselt) retreated and attempted to pass through to Buluwayo by

Selous road, but were hotly pursued, and as the bush all along their route was full of Kaffirs they were compelled to turn back on the road to Belingwe. That at Graham's store they saw the remains of a small laager, which had apparently held about sixty men, and there were signs of an engagement, empty cartridge-cases lying about. They further reported that they saw no fresh tracks on the road from Buluwayo to Gwelo. That they got as far as the west bank of the Inseza on the 3rd inst., and had to hang about there all day and shift their position three times, owing to some Kaffirs getting round them. That late in the afternoon they noticed smoke signals sent up from the kraal on the northern side of the drift, and after dark a large beacon fire on the Bembesi hill was answered all along the Inseza range. They had to wait until about 11 p.m. before they got across the Inseza River, and it took them three hours before they got through the line of kraals on the

east bank. They also reported that the kraals were inhabited by women and children, and that work was being carried on in the lands adjoining these kraals. Cumming's iron store at Inseza had been burnt down, and his sixteen donkeys killed. The coach stables at Malomachopie were intact as they passed by, but were burned down when they returned. They saw a few signs of cattle having been moved along the country, but at several places along the route they noticed tracks where large bodies of Kaffirs had crossed their path. They were of opinion Buluwayo was environed by the rebels, but as to whether they were close up to the town or only holding the approaches at a distance of about twelve miles, they were not in a position to say. That Thabas Induna was full of Kaffirs, and they heard the report of a seven-pounder before they came in contact with them there.

On the morning of the 6th at 7.15 a.m. two boys came in with despatches from

Captain H. Hopper, who had come on from Victoria with twenty mounted men, one Maxim gun, and two Scotch carts, carrying provisions and 15,000 rounds of Martini - Henry ammunition. I could scarcely credit the news ; it seemed almost too good to be true that assistance should come so soon. Nevertheless, it put new life into the garrison, and even the sick men got out and tried to catch sight of the column of dust indicating the approach of our friends. I at once sent Captain Frankland with several mounted men to assist Captain Hopper and his party to cross the Umchingwe River, which had a very bad drift unless one knew it well. I also sent on fresh oxen to pull in the carts. We had been told that the Victoria oxen were suffering from rinderpest, and as we were then still free from it in Belingwe it was thought advisable to take precautions to remain so if possible. Accordingly fresh spans with fresh trek gear were sent forward, and the sick oxen sent

away to leeward of the laager a few miles. They were visited every day until it was discovered that they were all more or less affected, then the order was given to destroy them; they were first shot, and then burned by heavy bush fires.

Captain Hopper's advance-guard appeared on the crest of the rise about a mile north of the fort, towards 12.30 p.m. It was a great pleasure to mount and ride out to meet them, and that all the more so when I found that he and most of his men were old campaigners who had taken part in the first campaign, and most pleased of all was I to learn that Dr. Anderson, of Victoria, accompanied him. Captain Hopper laughingly said that he had come to fetch me out, but as Captain Frankland had informed him that I did not intend to leave for a few weeks yet he thought it would be best to rest his men and horses for a few days if I would kindly have him and his men as guests. We shook hands very warmly on the sugges-

tion, and I assured him that as long as there was a bite and a sup to be divided in Belingwe he and his followers were most welcome to it. He then gave the order to march on to the fort, which was manned by the Belingwe men, who showed their appreciation of the new-comers by welcoming them with three lusty cheers.

The following are extracts from the Belingwe garrison orders relating to the arrival of Captain Hopper and his men, which may not be uninteresting to my readers :—

"FORT BELINGWE,

"7—5—'96.

"The following officers, non-commissioned officers and men, having arrived from Victoria to assist in the relief of the garrison, are taken on its strength from this date until further orders :—

Captain Harman Hopper	Sergeant Perry
Lieut. F. R. Caldecott	,, Weale
Surg.-Lieut. W. Anderson	,, Tate
Sergeant-Major Nolan	Corporal Mcpartland

Corporal Clark	Trooper Potgieter
„ Halkett	„ Carruthers
Trooper Noakes	„ Southey
„ Wray	„ Forbes
„ O'Reilly	„ Goddard
„ Hillier	„ Whitaker
„ Van der Walt	„ Berry

"The Officer Commanding Fort Belingwe wishes to take this opportunity of thanking Captain Hopper, Lieutenant Caldecott, Dr. Anderson, and the gallant fellows who have accompanied them to the relief of the garrison, for their noble conduct. He wishes them to understand that he thoroughly understands and appreciates the kind, generous, and brave sentiments which induced them to undertake their perilous journey, and he sincerely trusts and feels certain that their stay here, whether it be a short or a long one, will be made as pleasant for them as circumstances will permit."

We were now able to do some patrolling and drilling. The Victoria men had brought first-class horses, most of them salted. Our

morning patrols went further out, and small scouting parties were always on the prowl, but the natives had evidently left our immediate vicinity for the time being, as none of them, or any trace of their recent presence, could be found, within an area of twelve miles.

The morning of the 18th brought two despatch-runners, with a most important despatch from Mr. Rhodes. It was as follows:—

"Please send several separate runners, each with the following message, to Laing, Belingwe, begins. Please ride down to Tuli to meet column coming in, a portion having instructions to detach themselves from Victoria column and place themselves under you, and to be led in by you to Belingwe, *viâ* Gondoque, to act under you as you deem best. Ends."

This was an answer to mine of the 4th of May, and proved that Harry and September had got through to Mr. Rhodes, and that we had not relied on him in vain. About

two hours after the arrival of the first despatch, the first copy came, and the second one reached us towards evening, so that the despatch-runners had all done well.

CHAPTER VII

Captain Laing proceeds to meet and take command of the Tuli column—Entrance to the Mapelabana hills—Scouts come upon Kaffirs who are insolent—A prisoner is captured—Indaba with M'Posi's son—Suspicious sounds at M'Posi's kraal.

I AT once set about arranging to go out to meet the Tuli column, picked out fifteen of the best horses, and asked for fifteen volunteers to ride them. They were soon found, of course. Every one wanted to go, except the sick. The Maxim was mounted on a strong set of springs and fresh harness attached, as we had a rough country in front of us, and might have to travel fast. The stronger springs enabled us to put on a larger supply of ammunition and provisions than we could have taken on horseback. The Maxim was drawn by two smart mules, with two horses as leaders, and everything was ready to start off at sun-

down. Captain Frankland was left in command of the garrison. We left Belingwe at 6 p.m. just as the sun was sinking, and by ten o'clock we were camped for the night close to the foot of the Belingwe Peak, some eighteen miles south of the fort. The latter part of the journey was gone over very cautiously, because it was on a small bush-covered hill in this vicinity that we believed the rebel Impi lay. To have gone any further that night would have been rashness. We therefore camped close to the edge of an old working on the "Zelandia" mine, which I estimated would cover both our horses and ourselves if need be, and the old dump heap would serve as breastworks. The night wore on and nothing came of it. We were all on the watch at daybreak, but saw no signs of the Impi. The order to saddle up was given, and before the sun was two hours high we had got another twelve miles on our way, and passed what I thought at the time the most dangerous part of our journey, until

the Mapelabana portion of the Matopos was reached. There were a few signs of an Impi, but as they were several weeks' old, I was half inclined to believe that it had gone to another part of the country. Several fresh footpaths leading from the mealie-fields to the wood slopes of the Belingwe mountain, led me to conclude that the natives had hidden away in the bush and krantzs and were still in the neighbourhood. The party halted in a good position and breakfasted about 8 a.m. The march was resumed again at 10 a.m., and by twelve o'clock noon we got to the top edge of the incline leading into the Mapelabana hills. There we found a lot of M'Posi's men and women thrashing corn. Our advance scouts were right on to them ere they noticed us, as they were working among the rocks. At the first glance it seemed as if they were barring our passage. It was impossible to tell, at first sight, whether the sticks they were using to beat out the corn were not rifles. The men were therefore at once formed

into skirmishing order, with the Maxim in the centre, and stood ready, whilst three of our best Kaffir linguists rode forward, and called out to the people. For a few minutes their replies were insolent, and two of the men advanced a short way, until they saw the line of skirmishers. They then beat a rapid retreat and gave a general alarm, which sent the whole lot off helter-skelter into the bush. One man who was not so smart as the others was made a prisoner. On being questioned he informed us that the Impi was still at Belingwe, hid in the mountain, and that they were collecting grain all round the district. He said the natives in front were all peaceful. They never saw us until they heard the men calling to them. Then they thought there were only three, but when they saw so many whites with rifles and horses, they knew we were on the warpath, and, being frightened, ran away.

I learned that the chief M'Posi was at home, but very sick. His son, however, was

about. I was inclined to believe that this native thought the information he gave was true. He further stated that M'Posi's tribe were faithful to the white man. I also believed this statement, because Carruthers, who was with the patrol, informed me that the people at a kraal close by had warned him not to come to Belingwe, because it was surrounded by rebels, and gave him food to take him back to Gondoque. He got back there, but with a very hard struggle, having had his rifle stolen from him while he was drinking out of a gourd handed to him by a native at a kraal some fifteen miles further on than where we were, and then chased for ten miles by a band of rebels with assegais, all of whom he managed to elude in the bush, as it became dark—the bush in this part of the country being rather dense and affording good cover.

After getting all the information the old native seemed to be able to give, the patrol advanced again, and got on to the downward slope towards the Mapelabana range

and M'Posi's gorge. The track now became very steep, and was flanked on each side by thick bush, and although the natives appeared friendly their sudden disappearance made me rather suspicious, every precaution having to be taken to avoid an ambush. Up to this point we had advanced rapidly, doing a good six miles an hour; but now our progress was rendered slow, owing to the more difficult surroundings. I don't know how the others felt, but I had that eerie feeling about me that makes one expect to see an enemy at any moment. It was not at all pleasant, and I was very glad when I noticed an open space in front, just something like one of our parks at home, with two large ant-heaps covered with bush in its centre. There I decided to halt for a short time to give the horses a rest and drink. We took up a position between the two ant-heaps, with the Maxim in the centre, and the advance and rear-guards extended on both sides, the Maxim being our main

body. The horses were off-saddled and led down to the rivulet about two hundred yards away, by one-half of the men, fully armed. The other half remained to guard the Maxim and light fires, to cook a little water for coffee, to refresh all hands. While these arrangements were going on I sent for H. Posselt, W. Lynch, W. Lyle, and Carruthers, all of whom were thorough Kaffir linguists, farmers and cattle traders, in the very district we were then in. They were thoroughly well known and personally acquainted with all the natives in the vicinity, and I asked them what opinion they had formed as to the loyalty of M'Posi's tribe. They were all inclined to give M'Posi the benefit of any doubt and say he was loyal, although at the same time they were puzzled at the behaviour of the surrounding natives. The fact of the latter having disappeared so rapidly looked rather suspicious and showed signs of guilt, because it is pretty well known that when a Kaffir is in the right he is always

ready to show it by coming up to any white man's encampment unarmed and in a very free-and-easy manner. Here we had no such thing, for although our halt was only of about an hour's duration, no Kaffirs approached nearer than five hundred yards, as far as we knew, and those that did appear on the surrounding hills were all armed in some manner. Shortly after the order was given to prepare to march the chief M'Posi's son made his appearance, coming up the side of the stream in a very uncertain manner. H. Posselt went out to meet him unarmed, and after a short indaba, induced him to come up to our camp. Posselt introduced him to me, and I questioned him as to the opinions and loyalty of his father's followers. He said they had heard many conflicting reports as to what was going on and that they were under the surveillance of the Impi, lying close to Belingwe Peak. That his father was loyal but at present very sick, but would be glad to come and talk

to me the following morning, and that we would be quite safe where we were. Posselt said to me in English that this man was his servant for a long while, and that he knew him well, but believed he was telling lies then, whether to make us feel comfortable and allay our suspicion or not it was impossible to say. I then told Posselt to tell the young chief that I believed his story and was glad to learn his father was loyal, and that when the proper time came I would not forget to speak of his loyalty to the Head Chief of the white men. That I would be glad now if he would go and tell his father and all the men of his tribe that they need not be afraid of us, as we had no intention of harming them in any way. I also asked him to thank Lusena (a petty chief whose kraal was situated in a very strong position about six hundred yards away) for giving Carruthers good advice and thereby saving a white man's life. He replied, "I understand and will obey; stay safely, white man." Posselt

answered for me, "Go in peace." He immediately went, and after getting away about three hundred yards he called out to the natives on the slopes of the surrounding hills, "All right, go home; the white men have no designs against us." He went on a little further and was joined by several others, and after a short confab they disappeared, and all others in sight withdrew.

I felt we were in an awkward position, but knowing that the natives had been taken by surprise I understood they would not decide on action until they had had an indaba amongst themselves and made a plan of attack. This would take them a night at least, and until they had made a plan we were comparatively safe. Orders were given to march at once and take every precaution to guard against a surprise. Every man's rifle was loaded and the Maxim belt fitted ready for action. The track from this point turned sharp to the left and through an avenue of dense bush, down a rough incline

of about 30°, for the distance of about half a mile, then sharp to the right into M'Posi's gorge. This gorge was about two miles long, thickly wooded, with high, solid granite cliffs, two hundred yards apart, and about three hundred feet high, on either side. A small stream trundled its way through the centre. Here and there the perpendicular cliffs on either flank were broken and small canyons led off at right angles on both sides. It was an ideal place for an ambuscade, but with the exception of a strong Kaffir guard at several intervals on the ridges watching our movements, we got through without any incident worthy of mention. We got out of the gorge and camped (making everything as safe as possible for the night) alongside a large ant-heap, which was levelled in the centre and a space cleared for the Maxim on top, with a slight breastwork, or rather shelter trench, all round it. The men were formed in two lines at two paces' interval—the advance-guard facing the front and the rear-guard the rear. The horses were picketed to a rope

stretched between two trees in the centre. A space for the fire was left between the horses and the men—the ant-hill and Maxim were on the flank and a stiff thorn fence was thrown up all round. I may mention here, that every officer and man carried a small serviceable hatchet, attached to his saddle, and they proved most useful implements. With their assistance it did not take the men who were in camp half an hour to fix up a very secure position.

When we encamped I was very pleased to see the women from M'Posi's kraal come down for water to the stream, within a hundred yards of where we were, yet was surprised that none of the men came near or were to be seen about anywhere. This made me feel uneasy, and if it had not been that our horses were in want of rest I believe I would have marched again after a short halt. As it was we had done a good forty-five miles and had got through what was considered the most difficult part of our route without firing a shot. I was very glad to notice that the men

got quite cheerful round the bivouac fires—each section of four by themselves—their heads all in line with the saddle, sitting on its pommel, at the outer end, to serve as a slight shelter, if necessary, with the rifle and bandolier on top of all, ready at a second's notice. The old instincts of the soldier commenced to warm my heart again and I almost wished, as I believe all that were with me did, the rebels would show and have a try.

We were very lucky in having first-class weather and a moon nearly full. Under such circumstances as these night in our part of South Africa is nearly as bright as day, and an object, such as a man or horse, is quite discernible two hundred yards away.

We had everything snug before sundown, and shortly after the horses had been fed and the men had eaten their slice of bread and bully beef and washed it down with a draught of coffee and stretched themselves out for the night, Captain Hopper and myself were having a quiet chat on the top of the ant-hill, alongside the Maxim, when our

attention was drawn to M'Posi's kraal by the sound of many voices, evidently in altercation. This put us very much on the watch, and presently we were advised of the approach of several natives, talking loudly, with the intention of letting us know of their approach. I sent Posselt and Lynch out, armed with their rifles, in the direction in which the natives were advancing, with orders to lie down about fifty yards out, challenge, and find out what was wanted by the natives. This was done, and the advancing party answered at once that they wanted to speak to the white chief.

The party were ordered to halt where they were, about two hundred yards off, and for two of their number to advance unarmed. After a short consultation they agreed to do this, and two advanced, one of whom was the young chief we had met at our midday halt, and the other his brother, a younger man, who had travelled as far as Kimberley and worked there as a domestic for several years. He had only returned

about a fortnight, and was decked out in a tricky yachting suit, a nice straw hat, and spoke the English language fairly well. He seemed quite proud of his clothes and his English, and I was very glad that his vanity let out the knowledge of our language before we entered on the business they had come about.

CHAPTER VIII

Another indaba with M'Posi's son—He is suspected of lying—Extra precautions taken—The patrol marches at daybreak—Arrival at Dooboolelo's kraal.

THE young chief commenced by saying that his father, M'Posi, sent greetings to the white man, and that he was very sorry he was not able to come down and speak for himself, but that he trusted his son would be taken as his mouthpiece, and that whatever he said or promised would be as if he, M'Posi, had done so in person. I thanked the young man, and asked what further he had to communicate. He answered, "My father wishes me to inform you that he is very glad the white men have got away from Belingwe, because the Matabele are now seeing nothing but blood, and it is death to live in open spaces. My father trusts that you will not waste any time in

getting from this, for he is certain that the Impi, lying on the bush-covered slopes of Belingwe, has seen you pass to-day, and you may depend upon it they will soon be on your trail, but your horses will soon take you far beyond their reach. My father trusts you will take his advice, he being a very old man, and of much experience with the Matabele, because when their eyes see only blood there is no reasoning with them, and if the Impi comes here and finds you amongst us we also will have to suffer."

I replied, "Yes, I see what you mean, and understand the position; but your father does not. You must not think we are leaving Belingwe for good. We are only out to see what your father and his people are doing, and others like them. I shall be back here again before a new moon comes round, and I shall judge of your father's loyalty by his actions. Before I come to the Nuanetsi River, on my return journey, I shall expect to find two wagon-loads of grain lying there. If I find them, then

I will know that your people are our friends, but if the grain is not there you will be treated as enemies, if you come in our way. Now you must go back and tell your father what I have said, and also disperse the crowd of people we can see from the ridge alongside your father's kraal. To-morrow morning, before the sun is so high (pointing to a place in the sky indicating about 8 a.m.) I expect you to send down at least two bags of mealies to feed our horses. Of course I will pay you for every bag of grain."

He said, "I will carry your instructions to my father, and you will have the grain."

We parted company with the usual salutations. As soon as they had gone one of the interpreters, who had been sitting down beside me watching, said, "Captain, these niggers are false; they are lying." I asked Posselt what he thought. He replied, "I also think they mean treachery, sir." When the envoys got away about four

hundred yards they called out to the natives clustered round the kraal to go away. This they did, but during the night the sentries reported several times that the buzz of many voices could be heard occasionally. An hour before daybreak the following morning the horses were fed and every man set to watch his immediate front, till there was enough light to see the surrounding country. Then the horses were saddled, and we marched off at a brisk canter, which was kept up on every bit of favourable ground for three hours. This brought us in the vicinity of Dooboolelo's kraal—the people who had tried to murder Carruthers. When we were about three miles from the head kraal, we left the main track, cut a drift over one of the many small streams in the vicinity, and keeping well under cover of the thick mimosa bush, with which the country was covered, approached the kraals cautiously. We found the natives were all on the alert, but evidently taken by surprise. They very probably expected us to keep the

main track. We camped about three hundred yards away from their kraals, which were situated at the foot of a high granite hill, in a strong position, amongst huge boulders and thick bush.

CHAPTER IX

A slight brush with the enemy—Dooboolelo's kraals attacked and destroyed—Another prisoner captured—Arrival at Gondoque—M'Tipi's people—West's store—Indaba with Umcheti and M'Kati, two of M'Tipi's sons—Umcheti promises three hundred fighting men—Lions about—Fresh spoor of horses are discovered.

BEFORE sighting their position our right flanking files had a brush with a small number of the enemy, and killed one of them. His arms were a rifle and three very sharp assegais. As soon as the camp was in order, Posselt, Lynch, and Carruthers went forward to communicate with the people at the kraals, and asked the chief to come down and speak with me. This the chief declined to do, and defied us. We gave him an hour to consider, while we were having breakfast. At the end of that time he was still defiant, so his position was attacked and his kraals destroyed. All

the kraals under him were treated in the same manner as we went along.

The name of this chief was Dooboolelo. He was a Maholi, and honorary chief of one of the old Matabele regiments during Lobengula's time. It was the duty of this chief and his followers, who were all located along a narrow fertile strip well adapted for the cultivation of mealies, Kaffir corn, &c., to keep a store of grain always on hand, to supply the wants of his regiment when necessary. It was Dooboolelo who ordered Carruthers to be chased and killed, and as he was the first chief I had come across on the march who could be proved a rebel I decided to chastise him and his following. He was, however, too clever for us, and all his people except two were out of harm's way, in the covers, alongside his own kraal. As we had no time to waste we left them there and continued our march, destroying several kraals under his sway as we proceeded. We camped for the night about seven miles north of the Nuanetsi River, and

as on the previous night, made our position as strong as possible; but except for the occasional howl of a wolf or jackal our slumbers were undisturbed. Daybreak the following morning found us all ready for the march again, and eager to get on. We reached the Nuanetsi River, made a good drift, and halted for breakfast on its south bank by 9 a.m. During the march the advance party surprised and ran down an armed Kaffir, who declined to give us any information as to the movements of the natives of the district. He was a fine, strapping fellow, and had the appearance of being a Matabele of good blood, and spoke their language fluently. He was accused of being a Matabele spy, but denied the accusation very emphatically, at the same time admitting he had served for many years in one of the Matabele regiments; having been captured in his youth and made a slave, serving from the day of his capture till the white men took Matabeleland three years previously, and when his regiment was

broken up he made his escape, and came back to live with his own people again. M'Tipi's people he was sure would corroborate his statement if asked to do so. The men offered him some preserved meat, but he would not eat. He said he knew the white men suspected him, and probably they wanted to poison him, and he would not eat until the white men had found out he was not a spy.

We marched again at 12.45 p.m., and reached Gondoque at 3 p.m. Gondoque is on the main road from Tuli to Victoria, and seventy-two miles south of Belingwe. The natives in this district are of the Basuto race—a very strong tribe under M'Tipi, and generally known as M'Tipi's Kaffirs. They have always been very loyal to the Chartered Company and friendly to the white men ; but nevertheless I looked forward with a considerable amount of anxiety to an interview with M'Tipi or his representatives. All the people on our line of march in this district fled on our approach,

but, with the exception of two old men, they were all unarmed, and the latter handed over their rifles at once on being asked to do so by the advance-guard. They also consented to guide us by a shorter path than the cart-road to Gondoque. We followed them and found they were quite right. We halted, formed a camp, and sent for the neighbouring chiefs, only one of whom turned up that evening, the remainder not being at home. At Gondoque we found Mr. West's storekeeper still there, but his supply of provisions had almost disappeared. This was a disappointment, for the men of the patrol had travelled with as little impedimenta as possible, and had taken only enough rations to last until they could reach Gondoque, believing that once there we would be able to get supplies. As all traffic, however, had been stopped for some time, Mr. West had not been able to obtain any food-stuffs from Victoria. All he could furnish us with was an ox or two and a few bags of mealies. The latter were very ac-

ceptable for the horses and the men also, for they had to boil them and use them in lieu of bread for the next few days.

Early on the morning of the 22nd, M'Kati, one of M'Tipi's sons, came down to speak with me. We had a short indaba, and he left to send off messengers to bring the other chiefs together. As soon as M'Kati left I moved the men up to West's store and formed a camp. The verandah round the store provided excellent shade, and the men made the best of their stay to rest after the rapid march we had made, The grass close by was very good, and the horses made the most of it. Altogether we were comfortably off, and only wanted information as to the movements of the column we were looking for to set us completely at rest.

M'Kati knew our prisoner, said he was one of the tribe and a good man. He was released at once.

About 8 a.m. Umcheti, the eldest son of M'Tipi, turned up with a small following.

He said he had not heard of any column coming up from Tuli, and he volunteered to send off six of his young men to look for it and bring back information. This was at once done, the runners taking a despatch from me to the officer commanding the Tuli column.

On the 23rd we remained at Gondoque. A great many of the natives came from the surrounding country and brought presents of mealies, potatoes, &c., to us. This assured us to a certain extent that they were friendly, but we could gain no information from them, either about the column we expected to meet or the rebellion. This made me rather uneasy, and inclined to mistrust them altogether.

On Sunday, the 24th, three of M'Tipi's sons, with a following of about seventy men, turned up, unarmed. Umcheti, the eldest, represented his father, and said that he had been instructed by the latter to come and greet the white chief and offer the services of M'Tipi and his followers.

He said, "The white man knows that my father's people have been friendly to the white people. We have kept the roads open, and have always given food and cattle to the white man when passing through our country, and when the white man went into Matabeleland to fight the Matabele Impis two years ago we also wished to give assistance, and you know that a party of us went with five policemen as far as Godhlwayo's, and brought back the coach mules which the Matabele took from this district. We were very much annoyed then because the white men would not let us fight, so that we could prove our loyalty. We have all looked at the induna in charge of the white men here now, but we do not know him, or remember ever having seen him before, although we know several of his followers" (here Umcheti pointed to Posselt, Carruthers, Lyle, and several others) "and we are glad that they remember us and know that we are speaking the truth, and they will tell their

chief that they know us, so that he may understand we are loyal. Harry" (pointing to Posselt) "has told me you are very angry with my father's people because they have not given you any information. It is not their fault. They were ordered not to say anything until the chiefs came to have a proper indaba with you, and now we have come, and our instructions are to tell the white chief all we know and give him all the assistance in our power." I thanked Umcheti, and asked him to tell me everything he knew about the rebellion and what had taken place in Matabeleland. The first part of his story was pretty much what we had heard from Buluwayo and Victoria, and was not of special interest. He introduced his brother M'Kati, saying, "As my brother is more active than I, being younger, he may have a more interesting narrative for you." M'Kati took his seat in the centre of the circle and said, "This boy, Tshaleja, and several others of my tribe have been away for some days

scouting and watching the movements of the Matabele in the district to the north of our own country, that is the Weza district, and they tell us there are two small Impis south of Belingwe—one in the Weza and Mapelabana about two hundred strong. They are collecting cattle and grain and trying to force the natives there to take up arms against the white man. They have also ordered all the grain to be reaped and stored for them at different places in the Weza range of hills towards Inyamandi's kraal. Inyamandi, as you must know, is a Maholi and an agent of the Matabele, and his people are dangerous to the white people at present. The other Impi is close to Belingwe. It is much stronger, and had a great many women and children with it, most of whom have come from Godhlwayo and the Lower Inseza. There are also a great many Matabele women located in the hills close to M'Posi's. The hills they are located in are called 'Sibua.' These women are there for the purpose of gathering grain

and storing it at convenient places in case it should be wanted by the large Impis who are now in the Matopos. There are two of them—one on the hills close to the Tuli Buluwayo road and the other further west and close to the Palapye Buluwayo road. The Matabele say these Impis will fight the columns of the white men and beat them if possible, but if they are beaten instead one Impi will retreat down the Guai River, and get into the thick thorn bush country where the whites will not be able to follow, and the other Impi will retreat by Shamba, through the Mapelabana, Weza, and Inyamandis, and on to Gazaland. This Impi will take all the cattle, because they will live in Gazaland, and this is the reason they have their women and children already along this probable line of retreat. You have now been told all we know about the Matabele and their intentions. We have not heard of any Impi of white men coming this way, but believe that there is one coming when the white man says so."

I again thanked the chiefs and their followers, and told them I would make a good report of them to the head chief of the white men, and finished by saying that when the column came up I would want three hundred of their young men to go with me and fight the Matabele. Umcheti said, "The three hundred men will be ready, armed with the rifles they had received from the great white chief several years ago when the white man first passed through this country, but as their ammunition was finished I would have to supply that." I promised them all the ammunition they would want and the indaba ended.

The chiefs and several of the older men stayed with us for some time conversing with the men. The young men went off at once towards their different kraals, shouting their war-cries and having mimic battles with each other on the way, evidently delighted at the prospect of having a chance of trying their strength with their natural foes, the Matabele.

A Group of "B" Troop.

The runners who had been sent on to meet the Tuli column had not returned or sent back any message. It was quite evident the column was at least thirty miles off, and I therefore decided not to wait any longer at Gondoque, and gave orders to march at 5.45 p.m. The moon was nearly full and the night cool, so that marching was much more comfortable during the night than through the day. Taking the old coach road from Gondoque to Tuli we got along at a smart pace for about three miles when the pole of the Maxim carriage broke short off. This brought us to a halt until another was cut from the bush and fitted. This operation delayed us about an hour, and whilst the repairs were going on, two of the runners turned up. They reported they had been as far as Goma, about thirty miles ahead, but had not seen or heard of the column we were expecting. Moreover, they had overtaken two Basuto police, belonging to the Chartered Company's service, who had

been sent out from Tuli, to scout the country as far as M'Tipi's, and they denied any knowledge of a column of men coming towards us. They said all wagons and men were sent on from Tuli by the Semokwe road to Buluwayo. The day before they left Tuli, thirty wagons and a lot of men had left for Buluwayo by the route mentioned. This was rather disheartening information. I was very much afraid that circumstances had occurred in other parts of the country sufficient to cause the Tuli-Victoria column to be sent in another direction. I was rather sad over this, but determined to march on to Tuli, if need be, and perhaps arrange there to get another column to go into Belingwe.

We reached M'Tipi's at 10.15 p.m., and bivouacked for the night. Starting off again the following morning before daybreak we arrived at the Bubye River shortly after 8 a.m. and stayed there to rest the men and give the horses the

benefit of the good grazing along the river banks. On the march I was surprised to find most of the native kraals deserted and no signs of natives about. This made us suspicious, and naturally a sharp look-out was kept. We marched on again at 4.45 p.m., the horses being in very good form, but the men rather out of sorts. The boiled mealies were not agreeing with them, and I was afraid the bad water we had to use along the route would cause dysentery. I remembered that the same feeding occasioned a great deal of illness amongst the men on the Bubye patrol towards the close of the 1893 war. I was therefore most anxious to get to Tuli or meet the column, so that the men might have a change of food, and had proposed to make three long marches during the night, expecting to be within thirty miles of Tuli by daybreak. The country we were marching through was covered with thick bush, and the only signs of human beings about, except

ourselves, was the spoor of what we presumed were the Basuto police, who had been carefully followed up by a pack of lions from the Bubye River. This was a source of speculation and amusement for the men. The offchance of coming up with the pack helped to break the monotony of the march. However no lions made their appearance, but towards sunset the advance files signalled the halt, and one came back to report the discovery of fresh tracks of horses on the road in front. This was much more interesting.

CHAPTER X

Approach of the Tuli column — Our advance files are challenged — The column is met — Captain Brabant arrives with despatches from Earl Grey—Setoutsi's—Scarcity of water—Reorganisation of force—"May"—Strength of column.

I RODE forward with the advance files and found that two horses had come along from the Tuli direction as far as the point where we were and then they had turned back again. It at once occurred to me that the scouts from the advance party of the column had been as far forward as this, but what distance they were in advance of the column it was not possible to judge.

Our march was resumed at once, and was continued until 6.45 p.m., when I decided to halt for a time. I had ridden ahead with the advance files the greater part of the way from the point where it was observed that the horses had turned round, and when we

halted to close up we thought we could hear noises in front, but they were so indistinct that we were inclined at first to put them down to our imagination. Nevertheless, we were induced to advance a little further, and soon became quite certain that there were people a short way in front of us. We proceeded cautiously for another half-mile, and could then see camp fires, and felt certain we had struck the advance of our relief column. I had just instructed Trooper Mitchell to ride forward a little way and challenge to draw the attention of their sentries in case of accident, when we were surprised by a challenge, in good English, from behind a large ant-heap on our left front, and by a second challenge from the bush on our right front. We, of course, answered in the usual manner, and then our friends, eight in number, showed themselves. They were all round us in skirmishing order, and it was just as well we were friends. They had been out digging in the dry river-bed, close by, for water, and had heard us before we

had heard them. Not expecting to meet any one, they at once sent word back to camp, had their horses in, and took to the bush in order to find out who we were. The sergeant in charge reported that the scouts, twenty strong, under Mr. Natrass, were encamped there for the night, and were making water-holes for the horses and mules of the column to drink at when they arrived the following morning. The column was laagered up about eight miles behind. This was, indeed, very pleasant information, and by the time it had been delivered my patrol had closed up, and we marched on to the camp with our comrades. I was very pleased to see a great many well-known faces among the scouts of the column—faces I had seen in several tight corners before—and I believe the hearty greetings which passed between old comrades in both parties sent a glow of enthusiasm through the hearts of all who were present. For myself, I scanned the sunburnt countenances of the advance party, shown up, as they were, by the glimmering

light from their camp fires, with a more intense interest, I believe, than any one else. To me they were more than old and trusty comrades. They were the men I had been ordered to meet, command, and lead to the end of the campaign. The thought passed through my brain as I watched them cooking and handing round a liberal share of their rations to the men of my patrol, that if these were a fair sample of the men composing the relief column, no matter what hardships were in front of them they would prove equal to overcoming them, if it were possible, and I wished from my heart then that I might be enabled to lead them carefully and successfully, without sacrificing any of them unnecessarily.

Many were the questions asked and answered round the camp fires that evening, and many a strong expression escaped the lips when the brutal slaughter of some old pal was related. The murders of women and children were commented upon, and condemned in anything but modest terms

by all, and it was very evident that the dearest wish of every one was to meet with and punish the murderers.

About an hour after our arrival Lieutenant Yonge, accompanied by Captain Brabant, rode in and reported themselves. Lieutenant Yonge was in charge of the column. He had little to state further than that the column had been delayed at Tuli three days over the original time fixed for starting, and that the horses and mules were suffering very much and dying from horse-sickness. Captain Brabant had just ridden from Buluwayo *viâ* Mangwe, Semokwe, and Tuli, with despatches from Earl Grey, the Administrator. The despatches simply gave me the entire command of the column with instructions to use it to the best advantage in quelling the rebellion. Captain Brabant was to remain with me and help to organise any native levies I might wish to have employed. I was delighted to have Brabant with me, because, I believe, without exception, he is one of the best leaders of native troops in

South Africa. He had proved himself such on many occasions, and during the 1893 war was invaluable.

Away from despatches, his narrative of what had been done and was being done was most interesting information, eagerly sought after, and very acceptable to us who had been caged up so long in Belingwe. The list of those murdered and missing was much greater than we anticipated, and left an impression on every mind anything but amicable to the rebels. To say that we were shocked would be putting it very mildly. Disgust took the place of surprise, and revenge was the most natural sentiment under such revolting circumstances. Captain Brabant was very tired, having ridden 270 miles in less than nine days, picking up fresh horses and rations wherever available along his route, which was anything but a convenient one. After Lieutenant Yonge had rested his horse for a time he rode back again to bring on the column the following morning.

On the morning of May 26th the relief column arrived at Setoutsi's, where I took over command from Lieutenant Yonge. The strength was about 130 white men, 70 Cape boys, 150 horses, 25 wagons, and 350 mules. The latter, thanks to "Doel" Zeederberg, were in first-class order. The horses were a very mixed lot, and not in very good condition. The wagons were loaded with provisions and munitions of war, and eight of their number were under orders for Victoria for the garrison there. The horses and mules had suffered from want of water during the march on the day previous to reaching Setoutsi. At this point the dams made by the advance party had collected enough to water them all well.

After taking over command I decided to rest that day and organise the force. Three mounted troops were formed, namely, Maxim Troop, under Colonel Hopper, with Lieutenant Stoddart; A Troop under Lieutenant Yonge, with Lieutenant Bates; B Troop under Lieutenant Beisly, with Lieutenant Bell.

Each of the above troops were about thirty strong. The remainder of the white men formed an infantry or laager troop. The Cape boys, some seventy strong, were also formed into a laager troop under Lieutenant Donald Campbell, with Lieutenants Howe and Moore. Lieutenant W. Lynch was appointed chief of the scouts. The remainder of the force was told off to conduct the eight wagons to Victoria under Captain Sporssell.

Lieutenant Chivers was appointed remount officer, and Lieutenant Lichtenstein ("Jumbo") Quartermaster. Mr. H. Posselt was appointed Lieutenant to assist Captain Brabant with the native levies, and Troopers Carruthers and Southey were attached to their staff.

On inspection of the men I found I knew a great many of them. They had come from all parts of South Africa to render assistance to their countrymen in distress. Many had given up lucrative employment in the Transvaal and elsewhere to answer the

call for aid, and, taking them all in all, they were a first-class lot to look at, and I had every confidence they would do the work in front of them well.

Captain Brabant, Lieutenant Posselt, and Trooper West rode ahead on the afternoon of the 26th to M'Tipi's to find out what was going on there and gather the feeling of the natives now that they had had time to think over the prospect of a fight with the Matabele.

On the morning of the 27th the reorganised column, with the Victoria convoy in front, marched from Setoutsi, and reached the Bubye River in the first trek. The column marched again during the afternoon, and laagered for the night on the west bank of the Umquqe River.

On the following morning, the 28th, M'Tipi's was reached and laager formed by 8 a.m. I resolved to remain here long enough to give the men some drill and musketry practice, whilst the M'Tipi contingent was being got ready.

The Victoria convoy marched on again

during the afternoon, but before this took place Captain Brabant had returned and reported that he believed the M'Tipi natives loyal and very friendly but disinclined to take the field; that he had not pressed this point on them, and that as the indunas were coming to have an indaba with me shortly perhaps an understanding would be arrived at then. That the natives were very friendly was evidenced from the fact that the women and children brought down presents of food, &c., to us, and chatted quite freely, apparently not in the least alarmed. This led me to believe that the men meant well, because if they had intended mischief the women would have been kept well out of the way.

Shortly after Umcheti came up with several minor chiefs, the principal one of whom was a man named "May," who had served with the British in Zululand, Basutoland, and also at Sekonis. He spoke English, and remembered Sir Garnet Wolseley and Sir E. Wood, and most of the principal officers. Umcheti said, "This man will represent me, as I am

too old to go to the front myself. He will lead one hundred of my young men, but M'Kati, my brother, will have the supreme command of all M'Tipi's men under you."

I thanked Umcheti, and said, "Where are your brother and the other chiefs, and where are the three hundred men? I expected to find them here, according to your promise of last Sunday."

He answered, "As soon as you give the order for them to come here I will send for them. M'Kati is now at his kraal ten miles away waiting your orders. He will come at once, and by the time he is here all the others will have come. They will all be here before midday to-morrow."

I again thanked Umcheti and gave the necessary orders, and at dusk that evening on the top of every hill a beacon fire was lit and answered by others from every hill in the district for a good ten miles around.

The following morning the men were paraded shortly after sunrise for skirmishing drill, and again at 11 a.m., when ball cart-

ridge was served out to them for rifle practice. A large rock background was fixed on to fire up against, and smaller ones pointed out to fire at. The different troops were put through a practical skirmish, and the shooting was very good. On the whole I was quite satisfied with the performance. Whilst this work had been going on M'Tipi's men had been rolling up in small detachments from every direction, all of them armed, the greater portion with Martini-Henry rifles, and the remainder with the old Enfield of different patterns, assegais, and battleaxes. The fighting men kept away by themselves, and were a fine lot of young warriors. They were very quiet and orderly, and seemed to take no notice of anything outside their own lines. With them came many others of all sorts, from the grey-bearded, limping old man down to the child in arms. The women and children brought presents of potatoes, milk, &c., to the men, and showed any amount of friendliness.

About 2 p.m. M'Kati turned up in full

MAXIM TROOP.

war-paint, which consisted of an old frock-coat, a very old silk hat, and a strong walking-stick. He wore the happiest of smiles, and altogether seemed to be in the best of humours. He reported that all of his men had not turned up, but that they would be present before the sun set. I asked him how he and his followers liked the idea of fighting the rebels. He answered, "If you will only let us fight when we get to them, you will be able to form your own opinion as to our likes and dislikes. All I can say at present is that my people and myself have every reason to hate the Matabele. They have been our mortal enemies for years, and we only wish to have the chance of paying them back in part for the harm they have done us on several occasions." I replied, "Very well, M'Kati. I shall do my best to let you and your followers have full satisfaction, but you must keep those young men of yours under firm control, otherwise they may spoil our plans. Captain Brabant will draw ammunition for

your men and they must be ready to march at daybreak to-morrow."

Towards dusk a council of war was held, to decide upon the best route to take for Belingwe. There was every reason to suppose that the rebels would have blocked the route which we came by, as it was the only route used by the white men to get in with their wagons through the Mapelabana Mountains (which to my mind are an extension of the Matopos). The Basuto chiefs said they knew of another easier and more direct route, along which wagons had already gone to Belingwe, and that it would be shorter and quicker to strike straight from where we were for Belingwe. The native contingent would cut the trees down and clear the way where necessary. This suggestion appealed to me as being a good idea to work on, and that for two reasons. It would shorten our march by about twenty miles, and as the new route would be about twelve to fifteen miles east of the old one, the chances were that we would be close to

the worst part of the country we had to pass through, before the rebels knew of our intention. They were almost certain to watch the route we had come by, expecting us to return that way. It was then arranged that M'Kati should send off about twenty of his most intelligent young warriors to act as scouts and spies. They were instructed to get in contact with the rebel spies if possible, obtain all the information out of them they could and misinform them as to the movements of the column—in fact, if they found it possible they were to deny any knowledge of a column coming in that way and were to find out if the Matabele or their allies knew of a convoy of wagons being sent on to Victoria. If so, they were to exaggerate the strength of it and not lose a minute in sending back word to me if they found the Matabele meant attacking it. M'Kati said he felt certain there were no Matabele spies among his people, and as his country extended to the banks of the Nuanetsi River, which was about thirty miles

north of our present position, he was sure no Matabele would be found south of it, and that they would be ignorant of our movements until we were in sight of the river. He concluded by saying, "My father's men have all been warned to keep their eyes open and their mouths shut, and where the Matabele are concerned you can depend upon them following the advice of their chief."

Everything was ready for the march now. Lieutenant Lynch and his scouts had gone on in front with a light wagon to mark out the way and select convenient places for laagering. He was accompanied by Captain Brabant and about fifty of M'Tipi's men. The remainder of them, close on three hundred, stayed with the column.

The strength of the column as it now stood was roughly as follows:—

	Officers.	N.C.O.'s	Horses.	Mules.
Staff	3	3	8	—
Maxim Troop	2	28	30	4
A Troop ...	2	28	30	—
B Troop ...	2	27	29	—
Laager Troop (including hospital)		20	2	—
Cape boys ...	3	65	4	224
Scouts	1	6	10	—
Remount ...	1	3	(sick) 35	(sick) 20
	14	180	148	248

Sixteen wagons for transport.

	White Officers.	N.C.O.'s	Men.
Native contingent	2	2	330

CHAPTER XI

Column marches from M'Tipi's—The Umchime River and Sekombi's kraal—Indaba with Sekombi—M'Posi's men and two hundred Matabele lie in wait for the patrol—Capture of a prisoner—The scouts have a short skirmish — Mapelabana pass got through safely — M'Tipi's men score a victory.

THE march from M'Tipi's commenced at 6.30 a.m. on the morning of Saturday, the 30th of May. Lieutenant Lynch and the scouts kept a good trek ahead for the first two days, making a road and selecting favourable watering-places. So far nothing had happened to indicate the presence of the enemy. Several of the native scouts had come back from different directions, and reported that up to the points they had been to there were no signs of the Matabele.

The first march, on the morning of June 1st, brought us to the banks of the Um-

chime, about three miles to the east of Sekombi's kraal. Sekombi came into laager with M'Kati and gave the following information — namely, "I am related to M'Tipi by marriage, and live inside his territory. I and my people are loyal to the white man. We will do what we can to prove our loyalty, but don't wish to leave our kraals now, because the Matabele are close by and watching us. Yesterday five of their scouts came close up to my kraal, but they would not enter. They were armed with Martini-Henry rifles and assegais. They inquired for information in regard to the movements of the white men to the south. My people told them that the white men had all passed on to Tuli. They did not stay any longer, but went off to the northward in the direction of M'Posi. Some of my young men have been over to M'Posi's kraal. M'Posi is working with the Matabele, about two hundred of whom are staying with him. They have blocked the pass that you came

through, and intend to surround you in it when you go back. If you had waited another hour the morning you left M'Posi's kraal your party would have been surrounded. You were followed until the rebels heard the Maxim firing at Dooboolelo's kraal. This astonished them, because they did not know you had a Maxim with you, and they decided to wait for your return, in the hopes of being able to get an advantage over your party. They have set traps at several points along the road, but as you have come this way you have avoided them. So far, I don't think—in fact I am certain—they know your column is here; we did not know until this morning. We saw M'Tipi's scouts yesterday, but thought they were only looking for information for the tribe. In these war-times scouts are always going and coming. I told you before, I cannot let my men leave their kraals, as our position is not strong, and as the Matabele are on the watch. If they found out we were assist-

ing you they would be sure to attack us. When you have passed on, all I and my people can do will be to keep a strict watch to the westward and let you know if the Matabele intend attacking from that side. This my people can do without drawing the attention of the rebels on themselves." I then gave the chief permission to go. He did not waste a minute, and was very soon out of sight. M'Kati laughed when he went, and said, "That man is much more afraid of the white man than of the Matabele. Although he is married to my father's sister, I do not trust him, although I believe he has told the truth, especially about the position of the rebels. I believe myself they will be close by M'Posi's, expecting the column to come that way. They will be sure to know to-night that the column is coming this route, and I am afraid we will have to fight through the other pass."

The column moved on again towards evening, and laagered on the north bank

of a small stream called "Matope," about fourteen miles south of the entrance to the pass. This night the sentries were doubled, but nothing of any importance occurred.

Before marching the following morning the country was well scouted by mounted men and natives. I was anxious to locate the rebels if possible, and I would have been glad if they would have attacked us on the flats, although the latter were rather thickly covered with bush. Just before starting three of the natives came in and reported that they had been close up to M'Posi's, and that all his people, with about two hundred Matabele at their head, were awaiting the column. They had heard of it, and expected it to come through M'Posi's pass. That several of their comrades were still watching M'Posi's, and would come in as soon as the rebels made a move. I decided to march on towards the new pass, and sent a strong patrol in the direction of M'Posi's to draw the attention of the enemy, if possible, on to it.

The column moved forward at 8.30 a.m., crossed the Weza range, and laagered up again at 9 a.m. until such time as the scouts came back. When they returned they reported they had seen no signs of the Impi. We marched on again about three miles further, and got on to what I considered a very good position, laagered up, and decided to show the rebels where we were by sending out small patrols to destroy, by fire, all the kraals in the vicinity. By doing this I hoped to provoke an attack. I was anxious to have an engagement before going into the pass. To a certain extent the ruse was successful, and brought the Impi down from the hills about three miles to our right. Our native scouts, when they saw the fires lit by the column, set fire to several kraals close up to the position held by the enemy, and afterwards had to run hard to return to the laager. The Impi came on, with the intention of fighting, but gave up the idea when they found out

that instead of twenty white men, they had a large column to attack.

On the morning of the 3rd, after scouting the country in every direction, the column marched straight forward again at 8 a.m., across the Nuanetsi River, and laagered on its north bank, about two miles south of the entrance to the pass.

The country we passed through during the morning's march was one vast mealie garden, the greater part of which was still unreaped. The crops were very luxuriant, and would prove of immense value to whosoever could reap them. It was, therefore, evidently part of my duty to stop any of this grain from being carried to the rebels in the Matopos. The laager was formed in a very strong position, and I did not intend to move from it until I had had a brush of some sort with the rebels. The scouts came in shortly after laager was formed and reported the road in front very difficult and that the ridges of the hills were lined by Kaffirs. I was still in hopes the

enemy might attack, and sent out word to the Cossack post and horse-guards to retire at once if the enemy showed any inclination to fight. Towards midday the outposts reported a strong body of natives assembling on the top of a large flat hill about two miles east of our position. Field-glasses were brought to bear upon this spot, which at first had about three hundred natives on it in sight. Before sundown their numbers had increased, until the hill was quite black from one end to the other, but it was impossible to estimate the number of people on it. It then appeared to me that the rebels did not intend attacking us in laager. They evidently wanted to pounce on us in some difficult part. Of course the large numbers we had seen during the day made the sentries more vigilant than ever, and as most of the men had had a good day's rest, very few slept during that night. I noticed this from the fact that I went round the camp frequently during the night. I had previously, however, formed an idea that if

the natives had meant to fight they would not have shown up at all until they commenced to attack, and in this idea M'Kati coincided with me. He said he thought they wanted to frighten the white men by their numbers, but did not want to come near the guns. The position we held was one that could be seen from some distance, and towards morning I decided to send on a mounted troop and the native contingent, under Captain Brabant, to make a feint on the position held by the rebels. A Troop, under Lieutenant Yonge, and the native contingent were accordingly detailed for this purpose, and left at about 4 a.m. They got close up to the rebel position, but more than half an hour too late to catch them at rest. M'Tipi's boys tried to rush the enemy, but the rebels, seeing the horsemen behind, elected to retreat after firing a few shots. M'Tipi's boys followed them up for some distance, took one prisoner and a few cattle and sheep, which they brought back with them. The prisoner, on being ques-

tioned, said, "The Matabele had left about sundown the night before, and gone on to Belingwe Peak to bring on the Impi lying there to block the pass, and that the natives of Mapelabana were all loyal." This latter statement we knew to be untrue, as the men had reported that the huts where they had been to were full of stores belonging to white people, such, for example, as boxes of tea, bags of sugar, candles, &c., and in one was a chest full of white woman's wearing apparel.

Whilst the sham attack was going on the scouts were in front trying to find the pass, but were unsuccessful. As soon as the mounted troops returned I went with a party of "B" Troop, mounted, to reconnoitre the pass, taking two of M'Tipi's boys along with us. They succeeded in finding the proper path, and I was very glad to notice the old spoor of a wagon which had passed probably the year before. The road was easy enough, but lined on either side by rugged granite hills covered with thick

bush. When we had gone about five miles, and could almost see the other side of the hills, we were startled by shots on our left. This was the scouts on the left flank engaged with some Kaffirs, who took to the bush after a few shots were fired. A little way ahead of where we were I could see the valley open out until it was nearly a mile broad. This was encouraging, and I determined to march the column in at daybreak the following morning. Accordingly on the 5th it started at daybreak, and took three and a half hours to reach the open valley sighted the night before. There we laagered in a good position, with one flank up to the rocks, and open ground in front, rear, and right flank. The scouts had come in contact with a few natives, but they took to their caves, saying that the Matabele had gone on to Belingwe. The scouts had been two miles further ahead than the point where the column halted, and reported difficult roads, but more open flats.

As soon as the horses and mules had had a drink and the men had had time to make a cup of coffee we marched on again. Half of M'Tipi's boys were sent on in front, and the remainder, on the right and left flank, manned the rocky hills on either side of our route, and we succeeded in getting through the pass without firing a shot. This was much better fortune than any of us anticipated. The column marched on about two miles north of the pass, and laagered for the night in open country, with good grazing for the cattle and good water for all. It was a great relief to my anxious mind to see the column safely laagered in the open flats at the southern end of the Belingwe Mountains, and, as we afterwards learned from the prisoners captured, good fortune favoured the column to a most valuable extent in this way.

I learned that M'Posi had not taken any active hand himself in the ransacking of the miners' camps in the Belingwe district, although several of his followers were with

the rebels, but as they were in the minority and without a leader the other sections led by their chiefs, namely, Wedza, Mapelabana, and Um'Nyati, Senda, and Selemba, took advantage of the circumstances and sent M'Posi's men back with scant courtesy and less loot. This, happily for us, led to dissension among the rebels in the M'Patini, when it came to a matter of fighting the white column. M'Posi, being the principal local chief and responsible, as I have already mentioned, to the Matabele for the actions of his tribe, was very much incensed against his neighbours who, under the old *régime* of Lobengula, were subordinate to him under all circumstances. When we passed through his territory, followed up by a body of about two hundred Matabele, he decided to work in conjunction with them and destroy us if possible, on our return, without the assistance of the neighbouring chiefs, who were threatened with a severe chastisement as soon as the white men had been driven out of the country. The Matabele leaders

had taken a prominent part in all this, and it was only when they found we had changed our route that they discovered their blunder, because when it came to the point of war, M'Posi's people were more pleased than disappointed to find that their neighbours who had treated them so badly were likely to suffer more from the white column than themselves; and when the Matabele urged them on to attack the column, during the afternoon we fired the kraals along the Usza valley, M'Posi's men would only come as far as their own boundary.

When the Matabele found that M'Posi was obdurate, they decided to let him stay and look after his own land, and started off to the westward to raise the men belonging to Mapelabana, Senda, and others, but as they were limited to time, and as the threats they had sent on a few days before still rankled in the breasts of the people they now wanted to assist them, they practically failed to get up an organisation sufficiently enthusiastic to tackle the

column. They did, however, succeed in gathering about five hundred men together on the top of the hill close to Senda's, but as none of the head chiefs turned up the greater part of the Matabele decided to rush back to Belingwe as soon as possible in order to obtain the assistance of the remainder of the Impi lying there. They left about ten of their number with the force that Captain Brabant and Lieutenant Yonge attacked, on the morning of the 4th, and we were subsequently told that nine of them were killed by M'Tipi's men in a narrow pass which they were trying to defend. While Senda's men were driving some cattle and sheep away, M'Tipi's men managed to cut off their retreat and put an end to them and a few of Senda's men who were with them defending the pass. Only one of M'Tipi's men was killed. He was shot through the head; but this was considered a very trivial affair by his comrades, who succeeded in capturing a good many cattle and sheep, as well as all

the rifles and ammunition of the Matabele and those with them. When they returned to camp they were very elated with their success and did a war-dance in front of the laager, rushing up to where a few of the white officers were sitting, and shouting, "Now the white induna knows we can fight and beat our enemies."

Trooper Anderson who, during the excitement of the attack, had gone on with M'Tipi's boys and kept with them all through the pursuit, reported that M'Kati showed great skill in handling his men and sent the party that cut off the disorganised rebels by a circuitous route under his son who knew every inch of the country. When the movement was complete the rebels were fairly hemmed into a narrow gorge between two perpendicular walls, from which it was impossible to escape. They were rushed by M'Tipi's men from both ends, and the fight did not last more than a few minutes. I was, of course, delighted with the result, and would

have been more so had I known that the report carried to the Impi at Belingwe was very much exaggerated. The mere fact of nine out of ten Matabele being killed would give credence to any amount of exaggeration, and this, with the disinclination of Mapelabana to come out of his caves, led the leaders of the Impi to decide to remain where they were until a more favourable opportunity for their operations occurred.

Mapelabana's people all stayed in their caves until we passed, and in detached parties on the hills flanking the pass when the column was clearing it. A few shots fired by the flanking parties sent the rebels off under cover. After the column had laagered, the rebels showed up in mass on top of a hill well out of range.

I should have been glad indeed to have known all this beforehand, as it would have relieved me of two days' great anxiety.

The whole success of the undertaking in front of the column depended on its being got through the western Matopos

without accident. The provisions and ammunition were absolutely necessary for success, and had they been lost the column would have been like a white elephant; but, thank Providence, the worst was all over, and now I felt confident of success.

As this was really the first opportunity I had had, I watched the behaviour of the officers and men I had under me very closely, and I am glad to say it was such as to give me absolute confidence in every one. They all did their duty in the most careful and deliberate manner, and when a few shots were fired from the flanking parties on the heights, just as the column cleared the gorge, it was a pleasure to see the rear-guard, who were in a very nasty position at the time, at once discard their horses and take cover in the bush facing the rear. The officer in charge knew that the horses would only prove an incumbrance, and that they could not get away except towards the column where they would be captured. M'Tipi's boys, who were in the

rear-guard, also doubled back and took up their position in line with the white skirmishers, but there was nothing for them to do on this occasion.

CHAPTER XII

Relief of Belingwe garrison—Muster-roll of new garrison —Death of Quartermaster Pope—Arrival of Captain George Grey with despatches from Mr. Rhodes—Several of the Victoria men return—"May" has an indaba with Mapelabana—M'Kati's son locates the rebel Impi—Description of Belingwe Mountains—Plan of attack on Selemba's stronghold.

I NOW considered the hardest part of our trek was over and that we should be pretty well able to arrange matters to suit ourselves in future. It was my intention, first of all, to relieve the garrison at Belingwe with men from the relief force. The men who were there were nearly all prospectors, and had a thorough knowledge of our own district and the country generally and would be of infinite service in the field. I therefore gave directions to move the relief party forward with enough rations to keep the garrison going until the field force had reduced to order the rebels in the district.

On the morning of the 6th the column moved forward about six miles and formed what was to be a permanent laager until the relief of the garrison was effected. The position chosen was a small granite hill, which used to be Selemba's (a Maholi chief) headquarters, his own kraal having been built on the top of it. The laager was formed hard up to this, with the hill for a base, the wagons making three sides of a square and the hill the fourth side, with the native contingent occupying a good position on its southern extension. The position generally was a strong one, with plenty of water close by and any amount of food for the horses and mules in the surrounding mealie gardens, which had only been partially reaped.

That afternoon four wagons were loaded up with provisions for the new garrison, the relief party told off and placed under the command of Lieutenant Stoddart, who was promoted to the rank of Captain, to take command of the garrison and forts of Belingwe for the time being.

The relief party to form the new garrison at Belingwe consisted of the following officers, non-commissioned officers, and men, viz. :—

Captain Stoddart	Trooper McLellan
Lieut. McCullam	„ Tannahill
Lieut. & Q.-M. Wilson	„ Stone, G. W.
Sergt. Douglas	„ Reece
Sergt. Coats	„ Wilks
Corp. Duffy	„ Stone
Corp. Nash	„ Walsh
Trooper Randell	„ Lyons
„ Grant	„ Jansen
„ McLeod	„ Woest
„ Nickliss	„ Coutts
„ Skews	„ Laing
„ St. Aubyn	„ Carlsen
„ Beavor	„ Palmer
„ Horwitz	„ Levin
„ Logan	„ Luckhurst

This party moved off at dusk, accompanied by a few men of the Victoria patrol, who had decided to go back to their homes, the idea being to move during the night so as, if possible, to avoid observation. The convoy got to Belingwe the following after-

noon without accident, a distance of some twenty-five miles by road to the north of our position. The first night we were in laager at Selemba's I sent for the three chiefs of the native contingent and gave instructions to M'Kati to keep his men scouting the neighbourhood constantly and carefully, until they located the exact position of the Impi, and, if possible, they were to find out what it intended doing, but on no account were they to expose themselves. M'Kati said, "I understand what is wanted. My men will be instructed and will do their best."

Leaving Captain Hopper in charge of the laager, I started the following morning before daybreak, and rode on with a small party of horsemen to Belingwe, for the purpose of arranging the relief of the garrison there. We got there before the convoy which had preceded us the previous evening. It did not take long to make the necessary arrangements. All the men of the old garrison except five volunteered to join the

field force, and were happy at the idea of leaving what had been more a prison than a home for them for the past ten weeks.

On my arrival Captain Frankland reported the death of Mr. T. J. Pope, the quartermaster of the garrison. This was very sad news to me, as it made the fourth victim out of our little lot who had succumbed to privations caused by the rebellion. Captain Frankland further reported that the health of the men generally had improved greatly under the supervision of Dr. Anderson, who had proved himself a first-class man, and had succeeded during the short time he had been at Belingwe in getting all the fever-stricken patients on their feet, many of them fit for duty. This was most welcome news. Captain Frankland also reported that Captain George Grey had ridden through from Inseza with despatches from Mr. Rhodes, one of which was practically my commission. This document is so characteristic of the founder of Rhodesia that I insert it.

"NEAR RIXON'S STORE,

"*May* 25, 1896.

"MY DEAR LAING,—We got your despatches all right at Gwelo, and we accepted all your suggestions. We instructed Victoria to send you runners telling you to go down and meet the Tuli column and bring it to your place, *viâ* the Gondoque road, you taking command. In case the runners did not reach you, we instructed the Tuli column to go, *viâ* the Gondoque road, to you, and when it reached you, you to take command. It had instructions to detach some meal and some necessaries to Victoria with an escort. Its strength is about 150 mounted men with sixteen mule wagons. These would reach you, less the escort and wagons with meal for Victoria. Your instructions are to do what you think best, to assume the defensive, and do the most harm you can to the natives around you. If, after doing that, you think the best plan is to work up in the direction of the Filabusi and Bembesi, do so; but these matters are left to your

judgment. We have every confidence in you, and do not want to tie you in any direction.

"Grey, who brings this, will tell you all the news. The only thing that you must bear in mind is, that you take command and do the best you can.

"Harry reached us all right. I did not send him back, as I thought wires from Victoria were quicker.

"You may think that the best plan is to work through the Filabusi and Molungwana to the Matopo, where we are eventually going; if so, do so, but if you do, I suggest you take a few mule wagons with you for sick, wounded, and food. This plan of going on long journeys with only horse patrols is a mistake. You can't fight on empty stomachs, though I agree that too many wagons hamper action.

"I can say no more, but thank you for all your good work.

"If you can, let me know what you are doing, but for goodness' sake don't risk

despatch-riders and horses. You will want every horse you have got. The nimble native you can use as a foot-runner.

"Yours (Signed),

"C. J. RHODES."

The new garrison marched in about 11 a.m., and the old one marched out about 1 p.m., the wagons being loaded with the men's kits and mealies for the horses and mules, a good supply of which was still left at Belingwe.

I had to arrange for the return of all the Victoria men who wanted to go back to to their own district, and four of the old Belingwe garrison who wished to accompany them, fifteen in all. They marched on the afternoon of the 9th, with one wagon and sixteen oxen to carry their kits, rations, and ammunition, under the command of Sergeant-Major Nolan, who was promoted to the rank of lieutenant to undertake the command.

Sergeant Weale, late Assistant Native

Commissioner, Victoria, was also appointed a lieutenant, and sent off during the night to get through to Chebi, who was still loyal and anxious to support the white men, with instructions to raise as many of his followers as possible, and bring them down to reap the corn in the fields of the Impatini; but owing to the rebellion breaking out in Mashonaland, Chebi and several loyal native tribes were needed to act against the rebels in their own more immediate neighbourhood.

As soon as all the necessary arrangements were made, I rode off with a mounted party to catch up the convoy, which had left to join the field force under the command of Lieutenant Caldecott. We got up to it shortly after dusk, and I was pleased to notice that the men were in high spirits, although many of them were weak from the effects of fever. They were all very happy, and behaved more like a lot of schoolboys out for a holiday than men who would probably be in action within twenty-four hours. Most of them had suffered physically while

shut up in Belingwe, but the first short march, and the pleasure of anticipating a meeting with, and punishing, the rebels for the hardships and deaths they had caused amongst the whites, had instilled new vigour into them. On the morning of the 9th myself and party rode on in front of the convoy and reached the laager about 1 a.m., where everything was found to be in perfect order.

Captain Hopper reported that M'Tipi's scouts had not yet quite located the exact position of the rebel Impi, but had seen scouting parties from it, which they believed they had managed to evade, although the enemy were very vigilant and always on the prowl, coming from and returning to the bush-covered slopes of the mountain, which was about five miles from our position.

The short rest and good feeding in the Kaffir gardens had already made a marked improvement on the horses and mules. The latter especially were in much need of a rest, as they had had very hard work all the way

up. What were left of them now were in prime condition but tired. We had lost a great many from horse-sickness. The mules seemed to suffer more from this dread disease than the horses did, although the latter had not all come through it.

The Cossack post reported the approach of the Belingwe convoy about midday. They were about five miles off, and moving slowly, as the wagons were heavily loaded with mealies. The convoy reached the laager about 2 p.m.

Shortly after this Captain Brabant came and reported that M'Kati's boys had located the Impi, but as the principal men had not returned M'Kati was not in a position to give a good report of the situation or strength of the enemy. "May," the induna of Umcheti's boys, came in and reported that he, with a small party, had gone back to the Mapelabana pass, and had succeeded in getting the natives there to talk to them from the hills. Mapelabana himself came down to within speaking distance, and said

he wanted to "konja"—that is, "surrender"—to the white man. "May" said, "All right; you had better come into the laager and do so." Mapelabana answered, "No, I cannot do that, because my heart tells me that the white chief will kill me for the part my people and myself have taken in the rebellion; but I will do what I can to put matters right and keep my people quiet, and this pass will be open to the white man. I will also send grain and sheep as a token of submission. If you come back to-morrow morning you will find the first lot left on the rocks at the entrance to the pass." "May" replied, "You had better send back all the cattle you took from the white men." The answer was, "I don't have any of the cattle. They were divided between Wedza, Um'-Nayati, Senda, and the Impi which is lying at Belingwe. The most of the cattle are at Senda's. All Senda's men and a great many of Um'Nyati's are there guarding them. They are kept in the valley close to the Nuanetsi River, and I don't think the

white man will get them out, the country being too difficult. The cattle have to be driven up the river-bed into this valley. I don't want to help the white man, and I don't want to fight with him. I wish to stay in peace here with my people. We will live like rock-rabbits in our caves until this trouble is over. I don't know anything about the strength of the Impi at Belingwe, but I think the white man will find out all about it before full moon."

"May" informed me that towards the finish of the indaba Mapelabana was rather inclined to be insolent, and taunted M'Tipi's men for helping the whites against their own colour. To finish up, he said, "I have told you to tell the white man that this pass is open to him, but you Basuto dogs will never go through it again. Your wives will very soon be widows." "May" was very wroth with Mapelabana, and his indignation was a source of much amusement to the other members of the native contingent, most of whom were young men.

Towards sunset M'Kati's son came back with a few others from a scouting expedition, in which they had been most successful. They had located the exact position of the Impi, but could not give any idea of its strength. They were quite sure, however, it was equal in numbers to M'Tipi's contingent, and had a great many women, children, and cattle with them. The scouts said the position held by the rebels could be pointed out from the top of one of the small hills close by the laager. I at once went off with them to the point indicated, and, with their description and the aid of a pair of good field-glasses, was able to sketch what afterwards proved to be a very useful plan of the rebel Impis stronghold. After this had been done, I asked M'Kati what he thought our chances were of making a successful attack on the rebels' stronghold. He said, "I gather from the scouts that the rebels have picked out a very formidable position, which they have strengthened by building stone walls all over the cliffs, behind

which they intend to take cover and fight the white man. They live in the gorge underneath the cliff, and have erected temporary huts for their wives and children, and kraals for their cattle and sheep. This gorge is covered with thick, heavy bush. The rebels have cut down a lot of the latter, and made strong scherms all round the place. My men think it will be hard to beat the rebels in this place, but the easiest way would be to get on the hills behind and attack from the top."

A short description of the Belingwe Mountains will give an idea of the position.

The southern end of the Belingwe mountain in the centre of which the rebel Impi was located forms a high, rugged ridge, the crest of which varies in height from 800 to 1,200 feet above the level of the flats. The rock formation of the mountains is a hard slate, tilted on edge, the measures of which are almost perpendicular. In many places this formation stands out bold and rugged, forming precipices varying from 10

to 200 feet in height, standing tier upon tier above each other, with little flat spaces at their respective bases.

I may here mention that the position pointed out by the scouts was a kloof situated at the foot of a perpendicular cliff, on the southern slope of the south end of the Belingwe mountain. The foot hills, which trended away from the bottom of the cliffs to the flats, were very steep, long, and covered with trees, and a very heavy undergrowth of all sorts and condition of creepers, many of which were very thorny, and in places forming interwoven masses, which could only be got through after the chopper had been used freely. Of course there were paths cut out from the flats to the stronghold, but I concluded they would be well guarded and perhaps rendered more inaccessible than the virgin forest to an attacking force.

By the time M'Kati's scouts had explained and pointed out all they knew the sun was getting low, and in doing so had cleared the peak of Belingwe, which up to the present

had cast a shadow all along the line of cliffs. Now the slanting rays shone right on to the slope and lit up the points we were most interested in observing. This was real good fortune, and it enabled us to decide on the spot, our line of action. Captain Sir F. Frankland (now staff officer of the column), Brabant, and Lieutenant H. Posselt, were present during the indaba, and before we left our dispositions were made.

Captain Brabant, with the pluckiest lot of M'Kati's boys, about one hundred, were to ascend the spur to the right of the rebel position, and, if possible, get into the works made by the enemy. Lieutenant Lynch was to lead the greater part of M'Tipi's boys up the gorge, straight on to the position, whilst the white men and Cape boys were to be led by myself up the left spur of the mountain and, if possible, the works on the left flank of the enemy's position, occupied by the Cape boys under Lieutenants Donald Campbell and Howe. All this had to be done during the night, and

the positions occupied before daybreak the following morning. This was our plan of attack and, as good fortune would have it, it was almost executed to the letter.

When we got back to camp the sun was all but down, and the night-watch set. I at once sent round for volunteers to attack Selemba's stronghold. Every man wanted to go, so a party from each troop had to be selected by their troop officers. The detachment from Belingwe volunteered to a man, and they were allowed to go along with detachments from the Maxim Troop under Lieutenant Caldecott. One from A Troop, under Lieutenant Bates, and another from B Troop, under Lieutenant Beisly, the whole making about eighty white men.

Lieutenant Donald Campbell had about thirty of his best Cape boys with Lieutenant Howe to assist him, and Captain Brabant about 250 of M'Tipi's boys, with Lieutenants Posselt and Lynch and the white scouts to assist him in leading them.

CHAPTER XIII

Parade of attacking force at midnight—March at 12.15 a.m.—A council of war—Waiting for the word "All through"—Description of the march to get into position.

THE attacking force was ordered to parade at midnight, the white men mounted. The remainder of the column was placed under the command of Captain Hopper, with instructions to hold the laager until the attacking force returned. This force paraded at twelve midnight, when the plan of attack was explained.

Orders were given that there was to be no talking or smoking on the march, as the whole success of the attack depended upon being able to get into the enemy's defences on the hill without their knowledge. If this were accomplished, the rebels would be in a bad position.

The march commenced at 12.15 a.m., and

about an hour brought us to the first part of really thick bush, at the foot of the Belingwe slopes. Here the mounted men gave up their horses — Sergeant Burnett being left with ten men to guard them. They were not very well pleased at being left out of the fun. I considered, however, that their duty was a most important one, for if the attack proved a failure, the safety of our horses would be very necessary for the preservation of all, if we had to make a hurried retreat. A short halt was then ordered to give the footmen and M'Tipi's boys a rest. Then the ascent of the first foot hill was commenced. Another hour of silent marching through dense bush brought us to the point where the attacking force was to divide into three divisions, climb the steep slopes, and surround the enemy's position. All necessary arrangements having been made, the parties separated and moved away from each other a short distance, and lay down to rest and listen for any sound that might serve to betray

any movement of the enemy's outposts. The only audible sounds that reached us, however, were the cry of the night-birds, the occasional howl of a wolf, or the baying of a pack of jackals. There was not the faintest indication of the presence of an Impi, not even the barking of a dog, and it appeared that up to the present our approach had not been detected by our foes.

While the men were resting, the officers met and held a council of war, at which it was decided that no signals were to be made until Captain Brabant had got into position. His party having furthest to go, it was reasonable to expect that the other divisions would be in their appointed places before him.

As soon as he was ready he was to cause the "Alert" to be sounded, and then wait for my bugler to sound the "Advance" and "Commence firing."

We wished each other God-speed, and took command of our respective divisions,

and moved off in different directions as silently as possible. I led the white men and Cape boys, Captain Frankland being next in command. For the first half-hour we skirted along the foot of a gentle slope, where the bush was not very thick, rendering our progress comparatively easy. Then we had to negotiate the crossing of a very steeply banked donga, which was covered with very thick bush and heavy undergrowth. Hatchets had to be brought into use, and a passage cut through this tangled mass. The bottom of the donga being reached eventually, the scramble for the top on the other side commenced, and the bank was gained, after close upon an hour's hard work. The Cape boys were now placed in front and in single file, and laid down to wait for the word from the rear that all were through. The intense darkness added to our difficulties, but I believe proved our best friend on the whole. We were now on the spur which we had to follow to get to the position

we intended to occupy before attacking, but we had still a good mile and a half of stiff hillside to climb over, rendered very difficult by a heavy growth of Mahobo trees, whose great leaves had commenced to fall and cover the ground with a thick carpet, which slipped away from under our feet on the slightest provocation. After a short but very tedious lapse of time, the word was whispered from the rear "All through," and then we moved on up the hill under the direct guidance of two of M'Kati's sons, who did their duty in a most admirable manner, and succeeded in getting us on the top of the first ridge, where we could then see the watch-fires of the enemy. The latter, of course, we intended to avoid. Here we again halted for a short rest, and listened for any sounds that might betray the whereabouts of our friends or enemies; but not a sound or sign reached us. Meanwhile our guides had gone forward under cover of the bush, and got close up to the first

watch-fires, which had been deserted. The guides were now at a loss, and were not able to form an opinion as to the intentions of the enemy. They said the outpost might have heard our approach and gone back to report, or they might have gone back to headquarters, thinking that all was safe.

I did not like the absence of the rebel outposts nor yet the silence. I was afraid that the enemy knew what we were up to, and that very probably they were already arranging a surprise for us. The order was sent back to be more on the alert than ever, and if attacked, the men were at once to lie down, the Cape boys facing the front, the Maxim Troop to the right, A Troop to the left, and B Troop to the rear.

After the first ridge was passed, our advance became more easy. The slope was not so steep, and we had got out of the Mahobo on to bare soil which gave a much better foothold. This continued until the top of the next ridge was

A Group of "C" Troop.

gained. Our guides now reported that we were very close to the position we wanted to occupy, but as the intense darkness was so deceptive they would like to go forward with only one white officer to make sure. This I agreed to at once, and Lieutenant Howe, a very intelligent and trustworthy officer, went with the guides. After what was to me a very anxious half-hour, they returned as quietly as they left. Howe reported that we were within 400 yards of the kloof. He had been quite close up to the position held by the enemy and believed they were altogether off their guard. The only signs of life to be heard were the movements of the cattle and goats inside the enclosures. He was confident the Impi was asleep, and so were the native guides, one of whom had advanced and got into the first breastwork, on the lower edge of the krantz. This was very exhilarating information and not a minute was to be lost before we made sure of our position. The

darkness was already showing signs of giving way to the first glimmer of day-break, and Brabant's bugle might be expected to sound within the next half-hour.

CHAPTER XIV

Disposition of troops—Before the battle—Description of the engagement—Taking of the enemy's position—Prisoner taken disguised as a woman—Treachery again displayed—War-dance by native contingent.

LIEUTENANTS Donald Campbell and Howe advanced with the Cape boys, with instructions to man the first breastworks, facing the main exit from the gorge in which the Impi lay, and to hold it at all hazards; it being very desirable to keep the enemy out of the krantz, and away from the stone breastworks which they had erected at every place of vantage.

We again advanced, and whilst Campbell and Howe were posting their men the Maxim Troop was extended along the ridge facing the enemy's position. B Troop then prolonged the line to the right, with

their right flank thrown forward to form a half circle. A Troop's turn came next, but they could not be found, and it was then discovered that nearly half of the white detachment had diverged and gone astray. Captain Frankland had evidently noticed this while I was busy getting the others into position and had gone off to try and find the stragglers. Sergeant Halkett was sent off to try, if possible, to guide them up to where I was in time to form into position before Brabant sounded. This I am glad to say was accomplished, and the cause of the straggling cleared up. One of the men, overcome with fatigue, had fallen asleep, and when the last advance took place had failed to pass the word on to the rear. The officer in charge acted very wisely. As soon as he found he was not in touch, he halted and listened, and was guided by the sound made by those in front to advance towards us. Luckily he got up in time, and his troop extended in rear of the fighting line to act as a support, or to

engage any of the enemy that might attack from the left flank, for we were not certain there was not a division of the Impi lying in the adjoining gorge. So far all had gone better than I had anticipated, and I felt pretty secure and certain of success. All that was wanting now was Brabant's signal to establish absolute confidence. The men were ordered to lie down but to keep on the alert. They were all very tired, some of them almost knocked up. My sergeant-major, a fine athletic young fellow, who had had more than a fair share of the work to do, came to me just as everything was completed and said "I am dead beat, sir, I must lie down for a short time." Captain Frankland was also very much exhausted, having had a lot of extra work to do.

I believe nearly all the men were in a similar condition. However, all the climbing had been done and it was yet a good half-hour to daybreak, which would give every one a beneficial rest. Frankland and I sat down together, to talk over matters, but

neither of us could keep from nodding, so we had to get up and move about.

I was now beginning to grow anxious about Brabant. It was high time he sounded, to let us know his whereabouts. Daylight was coming in rapidly, and objects at a distance of fifty yards were becoming quite distinct. Campbell sent down to say he had manned the first breastwork and had thrown a line of skirmishers across the main footpath from the gorge. Silence reigned supreme, and I hardly ever remember a more beautiful daybreak. As daylight became stronger the line of skirmishers grew more distinct, and many irregularities could be noticed. I decided to wait for Brabant before correcting them. It was quite plain that most of the men were fast asleep, stretched out face down, with their rifles clasped in their right hand and a few loose cartridges in the left, all ready. Many of them had stripped off their jackets and only waited the word to advance. I was pleasantly, and perhaps I may be

pardoned for saying proudly, contemplating the scene, when, welcome sound, from far up the mountain on the other side of the gorge came the first note of the bugle from Brabant. The bugler must have been a little nervous, because his first attempt at sounding a call ended in a most discordant wail, but, evidently recovering himself, the next blast brought the "Alert" ringing clearly across the gorge. Frankland and myself burst into a hearty laugh, and anxiety fled from me. The men all jumped to a kneeling position, and kept an anxious and expectant watch to their front.

After the last sound of the bugle had echoed itself out along the krantz on either hand, silence again took command, but only for a few seconds. During that short period, however, it was very distinct, all eyes and ears being fixed on the gorge in front. Presently from the thick cover of the bushy slope a buzz as of many voices commenced to reach our ears. This gradually increased until it was quite an uproar, and then it

subsided, when the distinct calls of two or three chiefs could be heard giving orders and shouting, "The white men are coming! Make for the krantzes!"

I now gave orders to advance the skirmishing line fifty yards, to correct intervals, and to lie down under best available cover. This was done and a second similar advance made, which brought us to within two hundred yards of the bush scherm of the enemy. Just as the fighting line took up position for the second time, a volley of musketry was poured from the first breastwork, and the Cape boy skirmishers opened fire all along their front. Another volley from the breastwork and then comparative silence. Lieutenant Campbell now sent along word that the breastwork had been rushed from the bush by a large body of rebels, but that he had driven most of them back into the bush again, and from where he was he could see large numbers of the enemy scrambling up the rocks to get to the stone walls they had made to fight

behind. I concluded that now it was time to make a general attack. Accordingly the "Advance and commence firing" was sounded, and responded to by a cheer from all sides. The sun had now made its appearance, and everything seemed to be in perfect order, and from the position I took up about the centre of the line of white skirmishers I could see all that was happening.

Brabant's men now opened fire from the krantzes opposite, and M'Tipi's main body emerged from a large patch of bush, and advanced rapidly over an open space of about two hundred yards and halted when they got in line with our right. M'Kati and "May" shouted out, "What are we going to do now? Are the white men afraid to advance?" This caused a laugh along the white line. One of the white men answered that we were not afraid to advance, but would not like to go in before the Basutos were ready.

As our advance was converging I now

pushed forward the Cape boys on the left into the bush, and supported them with the Maxim Troop, ordered a few rounds to be fired, and moved the whole line forward about thirty yards. Halting the white skirmishers where they had a good view of the krantz over the tops of the trees, our advances roused up M'Kati's men, and after firing a volley into the bush in front of them, they charged it in a body in a most gallant manner. They were checked at the fence for a few seconds, but the rifle fire from the Cape boys cleared the front, and very soon Cape boys and Basutos were out of sight in the thick bush. Then the rattle of musketry with a mixture of savage yells was all that could be heard, but it was soon evident the rebels were not holding their own. The attention of the white skirmishers was drawn to the krantzes, upon which large numbers of the enemy were seen swarming, firing their rifles at anything and covering their retreat by a shower of large stones, not being at all particular whether they struck

friend or foe as long as the individual made good his retreat and got in behind a stone barricade, from which fire was opened, but did no harm worth speaking of, and as they were surrounded on three sides and exposed to a cross fire from good shots under cover, they soon gave up attempting to return our fire. It was, moreover, amusing every now and again to see one of their stone walls commence to move down the cliff; solid at first, but shortly to become a scattered shower of huge stones which went crashing to the bottom of the cliff, doing far more damage to themselves than to the attacking force.

At the end of an hour resistance was practically finished. The white men were kept in their position, and Brabant's men moved off to the right, and getting on top of the mountain, advanced along the zigzag on to the breastworks. As they approached some very exciting hand-to-hand encounters took place on the cliff, in which assegais, battleaxes, and shields played a prominent

part. The attack virtually ended in a proper Kaffir fashion, the white men and Cape boys having been drawn back and not allowed to enter the enclosure. By nine o'clock the position was taken and the Impi which had contributed to organise the bands that committed so many cruel murders amongst the white people in the Lower Inseza and Filabusi districts was practically disbanded.

M'Kati and his people captured a good many oxen and sheep and about a hundred women and children, nearly half of whom were Matabele from the Inseza and Filabusi districts. One man, disguised as a woman, was taken prisoner, and although he was very cunning, his little trick was discovered by the Basutos at once. He was reported and pointed out to me. I advanced to interrogate him, but one of the young Basutos got excited, having noticed what he took to be the shaft of an assegai under the sheepskin, he shouted out, "Be careful, N'Kos, he will kill you," and advancing with his knobkerry he made a stroke at the rebel's

head, which the latter cleverly parried and dashed off through the crowd of women and children, only to fall a victim to a Martini-Henry bullet, which put an end to his flight and existence.

M'Kati was highly delighted at his success, and it was most amusing to see him leading the war-dance, in an old frock-coat and bowler hat, with a rifle in one hand and a bunch of assegais in the other.

The enemy's loss was not estimated; it would have taken too long to find out in the thick bush, but it was pretty severe.

Our loss was trifling, considering the work undertaken. Paul Zandvogle, a Cape boy, was killed. Captain Brabant and a few others slightly wounded. A few of M'Kati's boys were killed, several wounded, one severely.

As soon as the Basutos had destroyed the enemy's stronghold, we buried our dead, and retired, getting back to our horses by 10 a.m., all very tired after the trying night march and excitement. I

noticed that many of the men went to sleep in their saddles on the way back.

We reached the laager before noon, and found everything correct. The men were at once dismissed, and went to rest.

The wounded—friend and foe alike—were handed over to the care of Dr. Anderson and his staff.

CHAPTER XV

The women and children captured are handed over to M'Kati—Senda's position—An attack decided upon—The encounter and its results—The enemy take to their caves and beg for mercy—Grain is found—The rebels send peace offerings—They desert their positions.

OF course every one was delighted with the result of our attack on Selemba's, and for myself I must say I was pleased beyond all expression with the manner in which all ranks behaved in action. I had had every faith in the men of the column before, and now it was confirmed. My only wish was to be able to provide them with more work as soon as possible, and to restore law and order.

Orders were given to M'Kati to interview the women and children, and find out as much as possible from them about the movements of the rebels everywhere.

He did not get much information from the prisoners for some hours, but at last one elderly woman came to him and said she was willing to tell all she knew.

The narrative was interpreted to me as follows :—

"I with about fifty other women and children and perhaps thirty men arrived at Selemba's the evening before last. We came from the Lower Inseza, which has been visited by a very strong body of white men, who have scattered everybody and destroyed all our kraals. Most of our young men have gone to the Matopos. Only a few came with us. They were all at Selemba's this morning. They were led by Meshlointombi, who was among the first killed. Selemba had his own following, about one hundred men; and the Matabele, under Gota Monzie, about four scherms, probably two hundred men and a few petty chiefs with a small following each. They were all taken by surprise, and never expected the white men to get

In Laager and Ready for Action.

up to them during the night. The sentries had all come back when the night got very dark, thinking it was impossible for any one to come up the stronghold except by day, when they would have been seen a long way off. We should all have then got into the cliffs behind the breastworks, where you would have found it very difficult to have beaten us. Nearly all our leaders were shot at first while trying to get to the breastworks. I have told all I know."

The women and children were handed over to his charge, with orders that they were to be well treated and cared for. M'Kati said, "I promise you they will have the same treatment as our own wives and children."

The Cape boys, under Lieutenants D. Campbell and Howe, did splendid service.

The men from Belingwe were now distributed among the troops already formed, and what was afterwards known as the Belingwe Field Force was constituted.

The distribution was roughly as follows :—

	In Command.		N.C.O. and Men.
Maxim Troop	Capt. Hopper	Lt. Caldecott	30 mounted infantry
A Troop	Lt. Yonge	,, Bates	25 ,,
B Troop	,, Beisly	,, Bell	26 ,,
C Troop	,, Jackson		30 infantry
Lieuts. D. Campbell, Howe, and Moore			70 Cape boys—Infantry.

On the afternoon of the 10th, "May," with a party of M'Tipi's boys, was sent off to scout the neighbourhood of Senda's position, with instructions to remain in the vicinity until the arrival of the column.

Towards evening a messenger was sent back from "May" to say that Senda's people were defiant, and had strengthened a naturally strong position by every available means, and challenged the white men to take them out of it. The scouts could not find any trace of the cattle formerly reported by Mapelabana, and thought it was most probable they had been removed to some other part of the country.

On the afternoon of the 11th the column moved up to within two miles of Senda's

stronghold, and laagered up in a good position.

I rode on towards Senda's with a small mounted party, under Lieutenant Beisly, to make a reconnaissance, and try, if possible, to find out the designs of the enemy.

The position the rebels held here was a high granite hill, with a small oval-shaped ball top, about a mile long, and five hundred feet high, the slopes of which were covered with a jumbled mass of high boulders piled on top of each other, in all sorts of fantastic shapes, forming large spaces or cavities, which were termed caves.

It was quite possible to move about among these rocks and get from one end of the hill to the other without exposing oneself. To add to the physical strength nature had provided a luxuriant growth of thorn scrub, which grew up and intermingled with the rocks, forming an almost impenetrable barrier through which the rebels had cut numerous footpaths, which zigzagged about among the rocks from one end of

the position to the other. These footpaths had all been blocked by large thorn-trees and made next to impassable. A thickish bush covered the flats up to within about five hundred yards of the hilltop, then there was an open space which had been cleared and cultivated. Our party rode on to the edge of this open space, and then along it for about half a mile, keeping a sharp look-out in case of getting cut off, but we learned afterwards that the latter event was not likely to happen, it being the intention of the rebels to keep to the rocks. With the exception perhaps of about ten natives perched on the top of the highest rock, evidently as sentinels, there was no sign of the position being occupied by a force of rebels. There was scarcely a sound to be heard except now and again the bleat of a goat. The rebels kept perfectly quiet.

After riding along and examining the situation as closely as a pair of good field-glasses would enable me to do, I turned towards our laager, not at all sanguine of

being able to inflict much harm on the rebels at Senda's, but decided to make an attempt on the morrow. It appeared very evident that a night attack was out of the question and would only lead to disaster, therefore any ideas I had of making one were abandoned.

During the night the rebels made a considerable noise, but whether it was to impress us with their numbers, or whether they were moving out and in, I never learned, but probably they were strengthened during the night by recruits from the surrounding hills.

The following morning, shortly after daybreak, Captain Hopper, myself, and a small mounted party, rode forward again to reconnoitre the position from a different point of view. On our approach the sentinels commenced to blow their horns, and we could see a distinct commotion all about the hillside. The natives seemed to be everywhere about, and commenced to shout insulting and defiant threats to us.

It was now quite evident that they were in force, and meant fighting if their position was attacked.

I decided therefore to move the laager on to a small rise, about five hundred yards from the foot of the hill, and nearly opposite to its centre. This would bring the greater part of the hill under fire from the laager; and the centre part, which seemed at present to be more thickly populated, would be within easy range of the Maxim. The laager was moved up accordingly on to the desired position.

As soon as laager was formed, the Cape boys, under Lieutenants Campbell and Moore, were sent off to the right, so as to turn the left flank of the enemy's position, and, if possible, to climb a good way up the ridge and attack downwards on the centre. As soon as they were ready C Troop was extended and advanced on the centre, to within two hundred yards, where they had a fairly good view. It was of no use going closer up as the rocks and

bush obstructed the vision. The Maxim gun was trained to work over them, and had a splendid field, varying from five hundred to a thousand yards. M'Tipi's boys, under Captain Brabant and Lieutenant Posselt, were sent off to our left flank, to attack from the enemy's right, in a manner similar to the Cape boys on the left.

Before they were marched off, about fifty of them were armed with three dynamite assegais each. These assegais were so constructed that when they were thrown they always fell point downwards. A detonating cap, with a French nail fixed into it, then caused an explosion. They were dangerous weapons, and only the boldest men would handle them, after they were shown the effect produced by the explosion.

Captain Brabant and his lieutenants reported that the men armed with the dynamite assegais were so confident of the efficiency of their arms that it was very difficult to keep them back. It was most

amusing to see the bearers dash forward, throw their assegai, and dodge behind a rock, with a diabolical expression on their faces, to listen for the explosion, and then dash out again and discharge another. I am not aware that any actual damage was done by these assegais, but the moral effect on the enemy was indescribable.

M'Tipi's boys had not been in action on the left half an hour before the rebels gave way and vacated the left flank of the hill; many of them succeeding in escaping to the hills behind.

Every arrangement for making the attack was completed by 11 a.m. Then the "Commence firing" sounded. M'Tipi's men were the first to open fire. They had come rather unexpectedly on a party of the enemy, who were guarding a large number of sheep and goats on the right of the position. This, of course, led to a short encounter, which ended in a grand success for M'Tipi's boys. The firing on the right caused a commotion among the rebels in

the centre. Many of them clambered up the rocks to see what was going on, and exposed themselves to the fire of C Troop and the Maxim. Then the Cape boys commenced to attack downwards from the left flank. This evidently upset the philosophy of the defenders, who began to yell and move about rapidly amongst the bush and rocks, letting loose their rifles and blunderbusses, but doing no harm. A few potlegs were sent over the laager, but they only served to amuse the men by their peculiar musical accompaniment.

All we had to do now was to watch the development of the attack, which was, owing to the difficulties to be overcome, very slow. At times the rattle of rifle fire was very sharp, but often died away to a dead silence, starting off again suddenly when some fresh nest of rebels was struck.

The skirmishers of C Troop were almost always engaged along some part of their line, only firing when they saw the rebels on the move. After a time they got used to

the passes, or gangways, which seemed to be the main lines of communication between different parts of the rebels' stronghold, and as soon as a party of natives appeared they were saluted with a shower of bullets.

This sort of thing went on for about three hours, the Cape boys and M'Tipi's men gradually working to the centre, clearing everything in front of them and destroying all the rebels' huts and stores.

By 3 p.m. the position was taken. All the rebels remaining had gone to earth in a cave under a high boulder, which was between 100 and 200 feet long by 50 broad. A large party located themselves there, and kept firing from that point of vantage. Lieutenant Campbell called on them to surrender and give up their arms, but this they refused to do. He then sent to the laager for dynamite, a few charges of which put an end to their firing, and although they would not come out of the cave themselves, they sent up a great many sheep and goats, and a very humble entreaty to be spared, pro-

mising not to interfere with the white men any more.

As soon as this was reported I went over to the cave and held an indaba with these people, who were evidently far down under the huge rock. They said they did not know where Senda was. They thought he was in a cave on a hill, or that he had perhaps escaped. That the cattle had all been taken off on the approach of our column, but that all the sheep and goats would be sent down if the white men would draw off a little way.

The man who did the talking wound up with an appeal for mercy, which I promised would be granted, provided their promises were kept. The attacking party was then withdrawn. Lieutenant D. Campbell reported having seen forty rebels dead; Captain Brabant that on the first brush a good many fell on both sides, but he could not give any numbers. The loss sustained by M'Tipi's men was trifling, and they treated it in the most offhand manner,

being much more delighted with their success than interested in their losses. They were to be seen straggling out of the rocks, laden with all sorts of loot. Among the Cape boys a few had sustained slight injuries, but no deaths occurred. There were no casualties among the white men.

As soon as the attacking force withdrew, armed fatigue parties were sent in to bring away as much grain as possible and destroy the remainder. Nearly all the grain found was in the husk, it being harvest-time, and the reaping little more than commenced.

The rebels kept their promise to a certain extent and sent down about twenty goats and sheep from different parts before night set in.

The laager remained where it was during night. The following morning a search party was sent into the hill. On their return they reported that the position was deserted. This practically ended the attack and the breaking up of the rebels at

Senda's. I was sorry the rebels still held the cattle, but decided to let them keep them for the time being and push on to where the services of the column would be of more benefit to the public welfare.

CHAPTER XVI

M'Tipi's men return to their homes—The enemy attack them in a gorge — Um'Nyati's stronghold found deserted—March to Buluwayo—Destruction of kraals *en route*—Narrow escape of column from grass fire—Discovery of grain hidden in the bush—The remains of the Cunningham family are collected and buried.

A COUNCIL of war was now held to decide upon the course to be followed with M'Tipi's men. So far they had proved themselves most valuable, and had done excellent work, especially as scouts, and the information they had brought in had led to a great success at Selemba's. Their work in the Mapelabana pass was also most beneficial to the welfare of the column, and altogether they had shown themselves to be a loyal and valiant lot of natives. The amount of loot they had collected, and the wish to keep it, made them anxious to get home. This wish was

hinted to me by Captain Brabant, and confirmed by Lieutenant Posselt. I came to the conclusion that it would be better to part with them on good terms. I was all the more anxious to do so because I now contemplated a march through the Lower Inseza, Filabusi, and on to Buluwayo, and because the continued presence of three hundred natives would have been a great draw on our supply of provisions. I therefore sent for M'Kati and told him he was at liberty to march back home or to come on with the column. He decided to go back, and Captain Hopper, with twenty mounted men, went back with the native contingent for a distance of about five miles, until they were nearly through the Mapelabana Mountains. The passage at this point becoming somewhat difficult for horses, and there being no signs of any rebels about, Captain Hopper left them and returned, destroying a few kraals on his way back. Three of our white scouts were sent on with M'Kati's men to go

as far as Is'Iknombo's, to try and get a hundred of his boys to act as guides, herds, &c. They returned on the 16th instant without any, and reported that as M'Tipi's fellows got towards the end of the gorge (which they were about to enter when Captain Hopper left them) they were set upon by a large party of rebels, who attacked them on the flanks. After a very severe encounter the rebels were defeated with severe loss. M'Tipi's men lost a few. Sergeant Wilson said M'Kati behaved splendidly, and practically saved his men by his coolness and bravery. He was the last man to leave the pass, and all his dead and wounded were borne off the field. They saved all their cattle and sheep.

M'Kati sent messengers to Is'Iknombo, but was not satisfied with the answer he received. He advised the white scouts not to go near him, and sent an escort back at night to guard them through the pass. This was our last communication

with M'Kati, who was certainly one of the finest specimens of a Kaffir chief I have ever come in contact with.

On the 15th inst. the column moved northward towards Um'Nyati's stronghold, and laagered up on the west bank of the Nuanetsi river.

On the following morning two wagons were sent back with an escort to Belingwe, to bring on grain for the horses and mules.

Captain Hopper, with Captain Frankland and thirty-six mounted men, were sent off to try and find out Um'Nyati's strength. The patrol returned during the afternoon. Captain Hopper disconsolately reported that Um'Nyati, after fortifying his position, had decamped, leaving nothing but empty scherms, stone breastworks, and huts, all of which were destroyed by the patrol.

Um'Nyati's spoor went in the direction of Shambo, but as the column was now to march by that route, I decided for the present to leave him alone.

On the 17th despatches were sent off

to the Administrator, detailing the work done by the column.

As I had now no native contingent I arranged to send off Captain Brabant, along with Lieutenant H. Posselt and Trooper Southey, to endeavour to raise about five hundred of Chebi's boys and bring them into the M'Patini district, for the purpose of reaping the crops, and thereby keeping the rebels from benefiting by them.

Whilst waiting for the return of the grain wagons from Belingwe, the men were exercised in skirmishing on horseback and defence of the laager.

On the afternoon of the 19th the wagons returned with thirty-six bags of grain. This, with what we expected to pick up on the way, I reckoned would ration the horses and mules until Buluwayo was reached.

On the morning of the 20th the column marched from the west bank of the Nuanetsi along Cunningham's trading route, in the direction of Shambo. The reason I had for taking the trade route was because

it led to all the principal kraals between Belingwe and the Lower Inseza. The horses and mules were fresh after the two days' rest and good feeding on the banks of the Nuanetsi. The weather was simply delightful, it being now mid-winter. The men were in high spirits and looked forward eagerly to having a slap at the arch-rebels in the Inseza. The country we were passing over was open, undulating, and well-watered. Um'Nyati's spoor was discovered by the scouts. He had only gone a few miles in the direction of Shambo, then turned sharp off to the northwards, having evidently made for the bush-covered hillside of the Dora Mountains, where I thought it best to leave him unmolested for the time being, trusting to his natural greed and love for cattle to find him and them at some more convenient time in the near future.

I may here mention that up to the present the dread rinderpest had not taken hold of the Belingwe district.

We advanced by easy stages, doing about fifteen miles per day. Everything in the shape of Kaffir kraals, &c., *en route* were destroyed, most of them being deserted on our approach.

Nothing of any consequence happened until we got to the westmost part of the Shambo Mountains. There the presence of a considerable body of natives was indicated by sleeping scherms for about three hundred men, and fresh spoor showed that they had been in use but lately. Only one native, however, was seen, and he was far up the slopes of the mountain, keeping perhaps a close watch on our movements. The scouts were lucky in capturing a few young cattle and sheep here, which were rolling in fat. We left Shambo behind on the afternoon of the 21st, and laagered about five miles further on, on the Lower Inseza road.

All the spoor of cattle, &c., we came across went westwards towards Godhlwayo, from which, on the afternoon of the 22nd, we could see a large and very dense column

of smoke ascending. I was in hopes this was the result of the work of one of the Buluwayo columns. If so, I conjectured that our task would be made lighter, and that we might have the good fortune to drop across an Impi retreating over the flats.

Towards evening on the 22nd laager was formed on a large grassy plain, a good fifteen miles broad, lying between the Shambo and Tandodzie ranges. The weather having been particularly good for several weeks made everything as dry as possible, and on this particular afternoon the wind was strong and from the east. Shortly after the laager was formed and the cattle turned out to graze, the quarter-guard sentries reported several small columns of smoke about two or three miles away to the windward. At the first glance there did not seem to be anything very particular about this, but as I watched I noticed others springing up. It was at once evident that the flats were being premeditately set on fire for the purpose of endeavouring, if possible, to destroy the

column. It was quite plain that there were a great many hands at the devil's work, for what at first were only a few columns of smoke soon increased into a dense black cloud, nearly three miles long, advancing rapidly, and growing denser every second. The sight was very appalling, and frightened me more than anything I had ever seen before. There was not a moment to be lost. The grass all over the flats was at least three feet high, and as dry as matchwood, and the stiff breeze blowing was bringing the fire down on us at a great pace.

The bugles at once sounded the "Alarm" and "Horses in." The men were equal to the emergency, and rushed out to get branches of trees, &c. A circle of fire, about a hundred yards out from the laager, was started, and kept in check on the inner side. In less than a quarter of an hour a good big band had been burnt round the laager. This was accomplished not a moment too soon, for a roaring mass of flames, about three miles long, twenty yards broad, and

thirty feet high, swept past our position, with a noise like a river in flood. Had the laager been enveloped in that enormous flame not a thing would have been saved. As this fire-storm passed the faces of the men expressed their feelings beyond any doubt. Every one knew we had had one of the narrowest escapes possible. The horses and mules in the laager were huddled up together, all quaking with terror. A sigh of relief escaped from every one when the danger passed us and rolled on, destroying everything it came in contact with. Our enemies had all but scored against us. Yet luckily all the harm they did by their diabolical attempt was to rob our poor cattle of a good feed.

The column moved forward again on the morning of the 23rd inst., and as it was now nearing the Lower Inseza district, one of the most populous and fertile in Matabeland, and being the locality in which the first actual signs of the rebellion were discovered, native kraals became more numerous. The scouts

and the advance and flanking parties had lots of works to do, burning and destroying everything that was likely to afford shelter or be of the least service to the rebels. There were a few signs of natives having been about lately, and towards the end of our second trek a large, well-beaten track was crossed, along which it was quite evident a great traffic had recently been carried on. Several of the scouts were sent along this path to try and discover the whereabouts of any rebels that might have happened to be close by, and one of our flanks (James Cook) in following up a small footpath, which struck him as being very new, found a large quantity of grain, hidden away in the thickest part of the bush, about a hundred yards to the left of where the wagons of the column would pass. This grain was all stored in grass bags, each of which contained about two ordinary sacks full of grain. The bags were all sealed with clay, and covered with flat stones. This was a most welcome and valuable discovery in more ways than one,

because it not only enabled us to replenish our stock of food for the horses and mules, but it reduced the rebels' store to a very considerable extent, and showed us very plainly that they had still a line of communication open to Inseza, along which we might find similar stores of grain. After loading up our wagons with the grain the column moved forward again, and laagered up for the night on the west bank of a rocky spruit, about one and a half miles east of Cunningham's farmsteading. Some of the scouts had been forward as far as the latter and reported its utter destruction, and also that the remains of the family were still unburied.

The scouts employed in following up the "grain track" (the name given to the large path discovered during the afternoon's march) reported that they had seen a few Kaffirs on the hills, watching the movements of the column, and that, at the sand drift of the Inseza River, quite recently a large quantity of cattle, goats, men, women, and

children had crossed over, going to the westward—*i.e.*, towards the Matopos.

The column moved forward early on the morning of the 24th, and laager was formed up within a hundred yards of the ruins of Cunningham's farmsteading. As soon as the halt was ordered I went forward with several officers to examine the ruins, and I may safely say it has not been the lot of many to behold a more melancholy, heartrending, and revolting spectacle.

The Cunningham family consisted of an aged father and mother, a son, and several grown-up daughters. The son was a married man, and his wife and children were with him. The family party, so far as I could gather from the men who knew them, consisted of nine persons, all of whom had their home at "Kildare," the name they had given the farm. They were attacked about midnight on the night of March 24th, and brutally murdered by a band of rebels, who used knobkerries, assegais, and battleaxes to do their devil's work. The roofs of the various

huts, in which the unfortunate family had been sleeping, had then been set on fire, and to a certain extent had consumed the bodies. It was impossible to distinguish any of them. We could only judge by the size of the bones whether they were those of an infant or adult. It was evident that in one room one woman and three children had perished together—the children having evidently been killed in the arms of their mother—for the four heads and the bones of the fingers of four persons were all together in one little heap. In two adjoining rooms the remains of what were probably two men, were found in one, and those of two women in another.

I was afterwards informed by a prisoner that one of the young girls, aged about seven years, escaped unhurt, by some means unknown, on the night of the murders, and got down to the banks of the Inseza River, which was about five hundred yards away, and lived there for a few days until discovered by a party of Kaffir women, who had come to reap the grain growing in Cunningham's

fields. These women caught the child, and one of them, with a degree of cruelty that I trust has seldom been equalled, held the poor child's head on a large stone with one hand, and with the other picked up another stone, with which she, infernal fiend, smashed the child's head to pulp.

The slight glance I had at Cunningham's was too much for me. I went back to the laager very sad indeed, and asked the men to go as soon as they had breakfasted and gather the remains of all the bodies, and place them in an iron box, so that they could be buried. The men did not wait for breakfast, but set to at once, and, with the assistance of Dr. Anderson, every particle of human bone to be seen was picked up and enclosed in a box. Captain Hopper read the funeral service, the remains being interred about 11 a.m., about fifty yards to the east of the homestead. A large pile of stones was raised over the grave, every man of the column contributing his stone to the pile.

The Cunninghams were proverbial for

their kindness and hospitality, and their home had always offered a hearty welcome to the wayfarer or straggling prospector who might have happened to be about after dark. Many of the men of the column were intimately acquainted with the family, and they were very much affected. Captain Frankland had been their guest about ten days before they were murdered, and spoke in unmeasured terms of their kindness to him. He had lost his way, but had the extreme good fortune to reach their homestead after nightfall. A very slight glance at the faces of the men around the grave, whilst the service was being read, would have convinced the most casual observer that mercy would be the last thing the rebels might expect to get from them.

Several watches and articles of adornment were recovered from the ruins and placed in a small box for the purpose of being conveyed to Buluwayo, and there handed over to the authorities.

During the afternoon I took out a strong

mounted patrol and destroyed several kraals, which were located in the hills to the south. At one kraal a dead body was found, but it was impossible to say whether it was that of a white or black man. A bullet had passed through the skull. We were inclined, however, to think it was the body of a Kaffir, who had met his death at Cunningham's or somewhere close by.

After destroying several large kraals, every one of which had been deserted some time, and all grain taken away, I followed up the footpath we passed the night before, until it crossed the Inseza River. There was fresh spoor on it of both Kaffirs and cattle, the latter probably pack oxen used for carrying grain, &c.

I had now become convinced that this path was the one most in use between this part of Inseza and the Matopos, and decided to follow it up as closely as possible with the column, in the hope of finding more stores of grain, and perhaps dropping across a foraging Impi.

CHAPTER XVII

Captain Frankland and party encounter a small body of rebels at Croft's store—A patrol goes to their assistance—Grain is found and sheep and goats captured—The enemy try to entrap the column—A brush with the enemy—The Umzingwani River and Wier's store is reached.

THE morning of the 25th the column crossed the Inseza River, and making a trek across the country to the westward, about a mile to the north of the grain path, had not gone far before it struck the spoor of a large column which had preceded us. I decided to follow this spoor until it crossed the grain path, and then to make after the latter again.

Sir Frederick Frankland, who knew the district we were in very well, was anxious to take a small scouting party to the south, about two miles, to find out what had happened to Croft's store. I

allowed him to take four of the best mounted men, with instructions to undertake no risks and to get back to the column as soon as possible.

We had to make a long march because water was not very plentiful, and after doing about seven miles the Buluwayo Filabusi road was struck. The column now changed direction and marched along that road to the south. Shortly after we got on the road the scouts reported rebels on the high granite hills in front and on the right flank, but only in small parties. Not long afterwards shots were heard in the direction of Croft's store. It was evident Frankland had come in contact with a party of rebels. The firing increased rapidly and I became rather anxious, being afraid that perhaps Frankland's party had been cut off, but as they were well mounted there was every chance of their getting back, even if they had to make a detour. I could not send back to their support without halting the column,

and as it was then marching through thick bush and no water handy it was undesirable to halt. The natives on the granite hills to our right were numerous, but did not make any attempt to molest us, although we could see plainly they were all armed. At last water was reached, at a place where a fairly good position was selected and laager formed, the Cossack post sent out, and everything got ready to repel an attack. The rebels on the hills kept moving round to our right, and shortly afterwards commenced to fire at the sentries from longish range, making fairly good shooting, but killing no one. I now became most anxious about Frankland and his party. An occasional shot from his direction showed there was still something doing. The column had marched about ten miles during the morning, but in a circular manner, and this had again brought us to within about two miles of Croft's store. Presently two of Frankland's party rode in and reported that they had come across a

small party of rebels on a little kopje, which they pointed out. The rebels had taken to the rocks, where Sir Frederick intended keeping them until a strong party could be sent on to collect the grain and cattle the natives had stored there. I at once ordered out a patrol of thirty men and a team of mules to bring back a cartload of grain, there being a Scotch cart at Croft's store.

I went off to assist Frankland, leaving Hopper in charge of the laager. I half expected he would have had a fight before I got back, but as the kopje was not far off, if such had been the case we should have heard the firing as soon as it commenced.

Our progress to the kopje was not interrupted, and when we got there we found Sir Frederick and his two men all right. The place was at once surrounded, but we could not get at the Kaffirs, who had taken to the cover formed by the disjointed rocks on the highest part of the hill. We, however, got at their main store of grain, which was a large one, although of not much use to

us, being principally Poco, a small class of Kaffir corn, rather like mustard-seed, and very bad feeding for horses and mules. We did succeed in getting a cartload of good grain, and destroyed everything else. This position was entirely a depôt for storing provisions from the surrounding districts, and had been garrisoned by about three hundred rebels, whose sleeping and defence scherms were still there. These we destroyed, as well as the huts of three large kraals, all of which had been occupied very lately. We also succeeded in capturing about fifty sheep and goats before making for the laager, which we reached in safety.

Captain Hopper reported that he had sent a small party round the foot of the hills to dislodge the rebels, who were firing at the sentries when the patrol rode off. He also reported that he had had no trouble since midday, as all the rebels had disappeared. This fact, with the information we had got from the Kaffirs in the caves at "Freddie's

kop," led me to believe that we were now on the heels of a retreating Impi, which I decided to follow up if possible.

Our laager was formed within two hundred yards of the grain path which still went straight for the Matopos. This the scouts followed up for a mile or so, reporting that they could not get any further because the rebels were in force on the hills beyond, and that it would not be possible to follow the path with the wagons, as it went in between the granite hills, through a very narrow pass, which was guarded by rebels. This was getting much more interesting, and looked like business, with every prospect of a brush with the rebels.

The column moved on to the south the following morning and halted about three miles from the hills. The scouts were sent away to the westward and to the south of the hill for the purpose of finding out if it was possible to get the column through in that direction. They returned and reported that the only impediment would be the

thick bush, and that they had seen no rebels.

I decided to try along the south edge of the hills and marched again at 1 p.m. in double column of wagons, with a party of dismounted men carrying axes to clear the bush in front of each. We had not gone more than two miles in this direction before it became apparent that the movements of the column were closely watched from the hills. On the hill nearest to us, along the base of which we had to pass, many natives could be seen on the sky-line. They were much disturbed and soon disappeared over a rise. Shortly after, some stray oxen, in an excited state, were rounded up by the scouts, who reported that others were being driven on in front. This accounted for the commotion among the niggers on the hill. The progress of the column had been retarded by the thick bush which, however, now became more open and the country more accessible as we got past the shoulder of the first hill, which terminated in a deep

gorge. On the other side of the gorge a long, flat hill, composed of smooth granite and covered with patches of dwarf scrub, rose and trended away to the westward. Behind this flat hill a high peak rose, on top of which a large body of rebels were perched, watching our progress, and perhaps from their point of vantage were directing the movements of others, who were not yet discovered by us. After passing the gorge, which had a thickly bushed entrance, Lieutenant Beisly, who was in charge of the main body of the rear-guard, sent in to say that a small troop of cattle were being driven across our line of march into the gorge, and asking for permission to take a few of his men to capture them. I sent him instructions to do so, and halted the column with the intention of waiting Beisly's return. As soon as Beisly moved off a large body of rebels showed up on the flank of the hill which we had just passed, and made for the sides of the gorge as fast as they could. The old game was being played with us.

The cattle were the lure. I at once sent Captain Hopper off with one-half of the Maxim Troop to assist Beisly, to capture the cattle if possible, and guard against an ambuscade. At the same time laager was formed without outspanning the mules, and the "Halt" and "Alert" sounded to put the advance and flanking parties on their guard. This had hardly been done before a rattling volley of musketry was fired from the gorge, followed immediately afterwards by several others. Hopper and the rebels were engaged, at the same time, on the flat hill on our right flank. The rebels now commenced to show up, dodging from one clump of bush to another, and in a sort of general irregular advance. All this looked like the commencement of a fight. The "Retire" was sounded, the picquet lines stretched between the wagons, and the infantry and Cape boys extended round the laager, at which the enemy were now directing their fire. Captain Hopper's party got back simultaneously with the advance

and flanking parties. Lieutenant Yonge with A Troop mounted, was ordered to advance in skirmishing order against the hill on our left flank. His instructions were to engage the enemy and then gallop back to laager, to draw the rebels on to it if possible. This he tried three times, but the enemy would not leave cover. He was then ordered to make a stand against them at about two hundred yards from the foot of the hill. The Maxim was trained and opened on the clump of bushes, wherever the whereabouts of the niggers was discernible by the smoke from their rifles. This had the desired effect, and very soon cleared the slope of the hill immediately on our flank, and gave the skirmishers some good practice as the rebels retired from cover to cover. Scouts were then sent out to the front, left flank and rear, for the purpose of ascertaining if the rebels had any force in the bush surrounding our position, but so far as we could learn they had not. The march was again resumed, and for two

hours a dropping fire was kept up on us from the hillside. This kept the right flank engaged all the time, but little damage was done by the rebels. Whether our fire had done any damage it was impossible to say, but it had kept the enemy at bay. The party that Hopper encountered had lined the bush at the entrance to the gorge and fired three volleys, which Hopper returned and cleared the entrance. He at once gave the order to retire, when he discovered he was just at the entrance to a deadly trap.

Out of his party he had one man—W. Potgeiter—wounded through the thigh, one horse shot dead and three wounded.

I congratulated Hopper on the excellent manner in which he got his wounded and dismounted men away from the gorge.

Towards dusk a fairly good position was selected to laager in for the night and a thick thorn-bush scherm cut and set all round it. The rebels still hung about on the hill, exchanging an occasional shot or two with our outposts. Needless to say the watch was

very much on the alert all night, but nothing happened further than that one of the sentries reported having seen three natives make a detour round the laager. Morning came but did not bring the expected attack. The bush was carefully scouted in front, rear, and left flank, but no signs of the enemy being in any strength the column was moved forward again.

Shortly after marching the rebels showed up on the hill to our right, and the rear-guard was engaged in a slight skirmish, but this did not delay the march. Captain Frankland went back and strengthened the rear-guard with the Cape boys. The rebels were only playing a harassing game, which lasted nearly two hours. Then they took to the hill on the right, and disappeared over its crest to the northward. Thus ended our experience in the "Glass valley."

Still cutting our way through thick bush, the column continued its march until the Umzingwani-Buluwayo road was reached, about a mile south of Wier's store on the

Umzingwani River. Here a halt was made. We found the rebels had wrecked the store, and killed everything they could lay their hands on, in the shape of man and beast.

CHAPTER XVIII

Rebel Impis still hovering about—Column arrives close to Buluwayo—The mythical Impi—Belingwe Field Force hospitality—Inspection of column by General Carrington and Earl Grey—The column is ordered to "Fig-Tree Camp" and the Matopos—Arrival of several unattached volunteers—Attack on Matopos postponed—Column ordered to advance on Inugu.

WE marched again at 2 p.m. taking the main road for Buluwayo. After crossing the river we came upon the laagering ground of a large column—"Spreckley's," I believe.

The "grain track" was again crossed, still keeping straight for the Matopos. Along it, probably the same day, had passed a large party of men, women, and children, cattle and sheep, all going towards the Matopos.

I did not think it advisable to follow up the path any further. The retreating rebels, if they wished to, would reach cover of the

Matopo hills before I could stop them, and if they wanted to fight the column they knew where to find it.

The harassing attack they had made on the column yesterday and this morning only meant to retard it until the women and children were got out of the way, for as soon as the rebels had accomplished this they left us alone.

I was determined to make for Buluwayo as fast as possible.

On the evening of the 27th the Makukupen drift, on the Umzingwani River, was reached, and laager formed on its south bank. During the afternoon march, small parties of the rebels had been observed on our flanks, but well out of range. I was told afterwards that there was an Impi on either flank of the column with orders to attack if circumstances were favourable. As the column which had preceded us took the Makukupen road to Buluwayo, I decided to march along an old prospector's road which runs along the south bank of the Umzingwani River. This I thought

would give the column a chance of breaking fresh ground until the Tuli road was reached and bring it in closer touch with the Matopos. All the kraals along this route were deserted, and we destroyed all that came within our line of march. Many fresh spoors were observed, all leading to the Matopos, and a few niggers, presumably rebel scouts, were still hovering about on the kopjes on our flanks.

The Tuli road was struck in due course, and the column passed over the northern portion of the ground, where Captain Brand's Gwanda patrol had had a stiff engagement some weeks previous.

The skeletons of his horse and several mules, and a few bodies of what we took to be rebels were lying about. I did not then know that Brand had to leave his dead, otherwise I would have caused a closer examination of the remains to have been made; but as most of the bodies were lying close up to the kopjes, where it was most likely the rebels would attack

from, and a good way from where the horse and mules were lying, I felt certain the remains were those of rebels.

On the evening of the 29th the column laagered at "Dawson's" store on the Umzingwani, twenty-three miles south of Buluwayo. All day the rebel scouts had been oftener reported than on previous days, but large bodies of them were not observed.

On the evening of the 30th the column laagered on a small spruit about four miles south of Buluwayo, and on the morning of the 31st it moved up to within two miles of the town. I rode in and reported my arrival to General Carrington, who received me very kindly, congratulated me and the column for the work done, and gave orders for the column to rest for a few days.

During the afternoon the column moved close to the "Eureka" mine, where good water and grazing were plentiful, and laagered up for a rest. Here we remained for the

next ten days, doing a lot of small patrols, mostly in the direction of Thabas Induna, where the spectre of a huge Impi always hung round.

Although my men tried hard, both night and day, to get a glimpse of it, the sight was denied them, but was reserved for the vision of a few more favoured mortals who never lost a chance of letting the whole country know when they had seen the Impi on the warpath, and by their reports succeeded in keeping the inhabitants of the town in a nervous state of excitement, and gave the men who had the work to do a heap of extra marches, presumedly to keep them from getting rusty. The men of the column and myself were indeed very glad when this mythical Impi took up its quarters on the brickfields, which were on the other side and much closer to the town than ourselves. But with all this the most of the men had time to go to town on leave and stand a general treat to many of their old comrades. The

General Carrington, Sir R. Martin, and Officers of the Belingwe Field Force.

following account of that happy occasion is taken from the *Rhodesian Weekly Review* of July 11, 1896:—

"BELINGWE F. F. HOSPITALITY.

"It was a merry band of guests and hosts that gathered round the festive *al fresco* board of Captain Laing's famous little force last Saturday night, in the light of a gigantic bonfire which reminded one of the Eve of St. John in the north of France. Speech and story followed in quick succession while the ample fare was being consumed by the light of an ingeniously contrived chandelier made of whisky cases. By the side of each guest was his own individual candle, and great was the fun at each man's effort to make his candle last the longest. After the Queen's health had been proposed and received with patriotic cheers, Captain Napier spoke in feeling terms of Buluwayo's admiration of the Belingwe Field

Force and its gallant commander, while Mr. Holloway spoke a few words in eulogy of Captain Hopper and the merry men who followed him to join Captain Laing. The 4th of July, which date it happened to be, was an excuse for drinking to the health of America, coupled with the name of the genial 'Jumbo.' After dinner an adjournment was made to the silvan concert hall, around the blazing fire, and there, under the sway of M.C. Donald Campbell, a right pleasant little entertainment followed, finishing up with the chairing of Captains Hopper and Laing by their enthusiastic followers, after the toasts of Mr. Rhodes and Dr. Jameson had been cheered with three times three. The guests at that Saturday will long remember the hearty, genial hospitality and good fellowship tendered by the Belingwe Field Force."

In the morning the force was inspected by General Carrington, who praised in no measured terms the bravery of Captain

Laing and his men, and his appreciation of their gallant conduct.

The column was also inspected by General Carrington and Earl Grey, the Administrator, both of whom highly praised the force and thanked them for the work done. The following account of that event is also taken from the *Rhodesian Weekly Review* of July 11, 1896 :—

"INSPECTION BY EARL GREY.

"On Tuesday, 7th July, Earl Grey, the Administrator of Rhodesia, inspected the Belingwe Field Force at their laager. He afterwards addressed the troops as follows :—

Captain Laing, officers, and men of the Belingwe Field Force, I am proud of the opportunity which you have to-day given me of thanking you on behalf of the Government, whom I represent, for your brave stand at Belingwe, and the services you subsequently have rendered. When in the greatest peril, Captain Laing and his force refused to come in, and under

a flag made by one of the garrison (Captain Frankland designed the flag and Trooper Huband made it) taught the enemy that Britons still know how to fight. I am told that many of you have shown quite a talent for inventions and devices that have added to the discomfort of our enemies, and that, under Captain Laing, you are prepared to give further proofs of your bravery. This chance will be given you as soon as General Carrington can make the necessary arrangements for your departure to the Matopos. I am pleased to say a victory has been won at Tabas I'Mamba by Colonel Plumer's column, where some severe fighting has taken place. A police force is in process of formation, and patrols will be sent out from various centres to scour the disaffected districts. Again thanking you for the pleasure it has given me to inspect you, I shall await with confidence your return from the Matopos, and the re-advent of peace and prosperity to Matabeleland."

On Sunday the 12th of July, at noon, an orderly from the General rode into the laager and handed me a note, which ordered my column off to Fig-Tree Camp.

The column marched at 3 p.m., passing through Buluwayo and taking in provisions there, then on again in the direction of Matabele Wilson's farm. As it was imperatively necessary for us to get to Fig-Tree as soon as possible, I selected about seventy of the best mounted men, three wagons for provisions and ammunition, an ambulance wagon with Dr. Anderson and a staff of hospital orderlies, and made a forced march for Fig-Tree, which we reached the following evening at 5 p.m. There we found Mr. Fergusson, A.D.C. to General Carrington, and two half troops of the new M.M.P., the men of which had formerly been in Gifford's Horse and Grey's Scouts, and a nice hardy serviceable lot they were. They were now A and F Troops M.M.P., under Lieutenants Chesney and Carney.

Having discovered that the Impi which

was about to attack Fig-Tree and ravish the district was composed of the same material as the one which hung about Thabas Induna and the brickfields of Buluwayo, an arrangement was made to remove the officer who had discovered it to a place where his powers of observation would be more appreciated and free scope given to his faculties of imagination. A new man was put in his place, and the police and my men moved on about three miles east of Fig-Tree to a position more favourable for our principal purpose, and where good water and grazing were procurable.

On the 14th of July I received orders from the brigade office to take command of the M.M.P., join my force with them, and be ready to march at the shortest notice.

On the 15th I received instructions and plan of attack for operations in the Matopos.

On the 17th a detachment of infantry, under Lieutenant Butters, and an artillery detachment with seven-pounder and Nordenfelt, arrived, along with several volunteers

unattached, one of whom, Mr. Percy Hare, had a letter of introduction to me from Captain Frankland. This young fellow, like many others, had left England on the news of the outbreak of the rebellion, and hurried out to take part in subduing it. He and mostly all of them were fully equipped at their own expense, and were dying for a fight. The strength of the white force now mustered was—

Belingwe F. F.	70	Officers and men	mounted
M.M.P.	50	,,	,,
Infantry	30	,,	dismounted
Artillery	7	,,	,,
Hospital	5	,,	,,
Cape Boys	25	,,	,,
Total	187		

To be added to the above there was a contingent of about twenty natives (friendlies) under Lieutenant McDonald.

On the 18th I got a wire from headquarters saying that the attack planned to

take place on the morning of the 19th had been postponed.

On the 19th I received despatches by rider, ordering an advance on Inugu, with orders to attack at daybreak on the 20th, and turn rebel Impi out of their positions, and then proceed to cut off the retreat of the rebels from the Cheleli valley, and join Colonel Plumer's column by that route, if possible.

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CHAPTER XIX

March to Inugu—Dispositions of forces—The battle of Inugu—A fresh attack—List of killed and wounded—The column moves for the Cheleli valley—Advance of a fresh Impi.

THE column was marched forward at 7 a.m., and reached Chawner's Camp at 9 a.m., where it halted for an hour to refresh men and horses. Marching on again it got close up to Inugu before noon, where we laagered up. Scouting parties were sent out, one under Lieutenant McDonald with natives, and the other under Lieutenant Fergusson, with Mr. Hare and a few men. Both parties returned and reported that there were no signs of the enemy. The natives brought back a little girl prisoner, but she could give no information further than that the men were all away, she did not know where. After some deliberation I decided

to move the laager forward under Inugu. The class of country we had to advance through now was most difficult and dangerous for an attacking force. It verged into a narrow valley, on both sides of which ran a line of rugged hills, more like cairns of huge boulders, rising from two hundred to five hundred feet. The space between them through which we had to pass being covered with thick bush, which helped to render the task more difficult for man and beast. However, by dint of perseverance, a good deal of whip-cracking, some language more forcible than elegant, and a sharp look-out to every quarter, the column was got through the narrowest and most difficult part of the gorge before nightfall, and laagered with its right flank close up to the rocks at the foot of Inugu, in a thickish bit of bush, which screened the position from front and half the rear, leaving an opening of about two hundred yards from half rear round the left flank and half the left front. The sentries were posted, and the men laid down in

skirmishing order all round the laager, about twenty yards in front of the wagons, their rifles ready. The native contingent was laagered about 150 yards in front, close up to the rocks and surrounded by a scherm. Every precaution was taken to guard against a surprise, and I believe every man present expected an attack. According to the story of our native guides we were just in the position the rebels wanted us to get into, it being their intention to cut off our retreat and kill us off at their leisure. For myself I felt certain that if there was any fight left in the rebels, they would show it here, but to make an absolute certainty of having an attack I had a bet of a "saxpence" with Dr. Anderson. It was always safe to bet with the Doctor. He invariably lost. Yet he was all the more ready to take the bet because he had had little or nothing to do except bandage veldt sores since we left Buluwayo. I am, however, very sorry to say that before twelve hours had elapsed he had more than enough to do, but he was

equal to the occasion, and did his duty most thoroughly throughout the action, which afterwards was acknowledged and appreciated by all.

During the night I don't suppose I slept more than half an hour; there was a good deal of wind blowing, and the sky slightly overcast. Occasional drifting clouds shut out a view of the sky, but it was never very dark. Several times the sentries reported having seen natives fleeting about on the rocks above our position, but no alarm was given. About 4 a.m. the men stood to arms, and as it was commencing to get light the mess orderlies were allowed to fall out and make coffee, the fires being inside the line of skirmishers. The "Boot and Saddle" was sounded at 5.30 a.m. By this time objects were discernible at about a distance of fifty yards. The last note had hardly left the bugle when a rifle shot was fired from our rear, and a bullet whistled harmlessly over the laager. Immediately after the

shot came the battle-cry and yells that are the inevitable accompaniment of a Matabele charge. I dropped the cup of coffee which had just been handed to me by our mess cook, and shouting "Stand to arms," rushed as quickly as I could to the rear face of the laager. I found the men all ready at kneeling position, and Sergeant Money had his Nordenfelt ready for action. All were anxiously watching the rapid advance of a yelling mass of rebels who were evidently vieing with each other to get to the laager first, sending out deafening shouts to cheer themselves on and frighten us, firing off their rifles as they ran. To me the sight for a second was a bit awe-inspiring. I called to the men to keep steady, and not to fire on the picquet, the men of whom were rushing towards the laager on the left of the attacking force, discharging their rifles into the mass as they came along, and doing their best to alarm the laager and stop the rebel charge. The order was given to commence firing,

and the first volley from the rear face put a check on the rapid advance of the enemy, and allowed our picquet to get in safely. The rebels halted about forty yards from the laager, sat down, and waited to be strengthened from the rear, at the same time pouring a hot and rather deadly fire on the laager. The first two minutes of this killed two men and wounded one close to where I was. The brunt of the attack fell upon the infantry troop under Lieutenant Butters, and D Troop under Lieutenant Bell, which had been wheeled round half left to facilitate their fire, as there was no attack from the open ground on our left flank. All this time our men had been keeping up a steady fire on the increasing mass of rebels, who now commenced to show signs of charging again. This was indicated by the peculiar "burring" sound made by the Matabele before making a rush. Sergeant Perry had run the seven-pounder round and was loading with case shot when the second charge took place.

The rebels got up to within twenty yards of our fighting line before they were checked. Just at this moment a very unfortunate occurrence happened. One of the men lost his head for the second, and rising up, shouted, "Are we to get back to the wagons?" He had hardly got the words out of his mouth before he was shot through the head. The men of the fighting line, not knowing who gave the order, rose up and looked round. The order was given to advance ten yards, lie down as flat as possible, and keep up the fire.

Lieutenant Butters set a brilliant example to his men. He dashed forward the number of paces mentioned, revolver in hand, shouting to them, "Come on, boys, we will soon dust them out of this."

At this pass I also noticed that the first man to dash to the front was the young volunteer Percy Hare. He rushed up to within ten yards of the enemy, who were wavering a little, and sat down on his knee

and commenced firing into them. The men, as soon as they understood what was wanted, dashed forward, and lying down flat took up the fire. Simultaneously a charge of case shot from the seven-pounder was sent right into the teeth of the enemy. This rather upset their plan of attack and their equanimity, stopping their fire for a few seconds. But again they commenced to gather. A second and third shower of case shot from the seven-pounder, the steady grinding of the Nordenfelt, and a shower of bullets from the rifles had the desired effect. The attack from the rear was broken. The rebels scattered and took refuge in the bush and rocks on our right flank. This at once brought them on to the fire of E Troop and the M.M.P., who were on the left rear of the laager. Lieutenant Carney had his men well in hand, and poured in a steady fire, which made the rebels seek shelter elsewhere.

A slight lull now took place, and I had time to go round the laager and rearrange

EARL GREY ADDRESSING THE BELINGWE FIELD FORCE NEAR BULAWAYO.

details. I had very little to do in this respect, as the troop officers had their men in good order, and Lieutenant Fergusson, A.D.C., had been about in every direction, rendering very valuable assistance.

Time flies rapidly in a fight, but up to the present I don't suppose we had been over ten minutes engaged and the worst of the battle was yet to come.

Whilst the attack on the rear had been going on the men on the front faces had not been idle—in fact, the rebels had so arranged that their heaviest attack should be delivered from the front. The party attacking from the rear were to make a great noise to draw our attention in that particular direction, whilst the main attack would rush in on us from the front. This they did attempt, but the fact of their first having to deal with the native contingent somewhat spoiled their plans, although the latter did not make anything like a good stand. Still they acted as a buffer, and by the time the enemy had dealt with them Hopper had his

Maxim trained and the men on the front faces thoroughly in hand, and opened a steady and destructive fire as soon as the friendlies cleared the front. This they did by rushing out in the open ground on our left and lying down, afterwards gaining the laager and packing themselves away under the wagons in huddled masses. I never hope again to see such an abject lot of human beings.

The fight now developed into a rifle duel. The rebels had taken cover in the rocks and kept up a lively fire for an hour and a half or two hours, doing a considerable amount of damage to men and animals. Our men returned the enemy's fire whenever they could locate the position of a few to any certainty on the rocks. Those in the immediate vicinity of the laager were eventually cleared, and Lieutenant McDonald, assisted by Sergeant Wilson, Troopers Nauhaus and M. Robertson, a volunteer attached, were ordered to occupy them with the native contingent. They had a great deal of trouble

in getting the friendlies to move from the cover of the wagons where the thickness of their numbers had made them a good target for the rebels, causing them a heavy loss. At last I gave them the option of getting into the rocks as ordered, or of being shot by the Cape boys. This had the desired effect. They decided to choose the least of two evils, and went for the rocks in fairly good style. After they were once in they did really good work, perhaps through sheer desperation, but to my mind they were chiefly inspired by the gallant behaviour of their white leaders. Their occupation of the rebels' central position caused the latter to shift about and expose themselves to the rifle fire from the laager, and it now became evident that the rebels had lost their vantage. The seven-pounder was employed in shelling wherever a party of rebels were seen to congregate. Sergeant Perry handled his gun splendidly, and made some excellent shooting. By about 8 a.m. the rebels had virtually given up firing, and I gave the

order to inspan with the intention of moving forward to the entrance to the Cheleli valley, when Lieutenant McDonald reported the rapid approach of a fresh Impi from the left front. I sent him back with instructions to keep the position held by the native contingent on the rocks, and had the Maxim and seven-pounder trained on the edge of the bush, through which the fresh Impi was advancing. They soon made their appearance, coming on in very good style. They crouched down on the edge of the bush with their shields in front of them and commenced singing a war song as they waited for their reserves to close up. They certainly looked well, and we could enjoy the sight all the better from knowing the game was now in our hands. Their leader, a fat old Cumulo, came up at last, and the war song stopped as he commenced to interrogate the rebels on the hill. Many of my men knew what he said. The rebels on the hill shouted to him that they had been very badly beaten and did not want to fight

any more, and advised the chief to be careful. A slight commotion could now be noticed in the ranks of the new Impi. I gave the order to open fire. The seven-pounder sent a shrapnel right into their centre, and Hopper stirred them up with a shower of lead from the Maxim. The new Impi burst and scattered in every direction; the greater part of them going straight back. The remainder rushed to take cover in the rocks, but finding them occupied on top did not go very far. They clustered on top of a large flat stone under a Marula-tree, making a beautiful target for another shrapnel, which was landed in by Sergeant Perry in a splendid manner. This was evidently all they wanted. They were now helpless, and rushed for the flats, exposing themselves to the rifle fire of our white skirmishers. The party that had fled backwards had now massed under a tree about eight hundred yards away. The top of the tree could just be seen from the laager, and our directions

were got from the leader of the native contingent. They had a good view from the hillside. The first shell burst rather high and did not do much, if any, damage. The next one burst about twenty yards from the tree and sent the rebels flying again. They never halted until they got on to the bush-covered slopes of the hill about a thousand yards away. Here the shells found them, and they soon disappeared over the ridge of the hill.

Thus ended the battle of Inugu, the stiffest fight I have ever been in, and I believe the only laager fight which occurred during the rebellion. Our force was just sufficiently weak to encourage the rebels to attack it and sufficiently strong to beat them off thoroughly. Throughout the engagement all ranks behaved in a most excellent manner and relieved me of a great deal of anxiety, for I must confess that during the first hour and a half I was at a loss to know what the upshot was to be. When the fight was at its worst I had time to

stand by the hospital wagon for a few minutes and watch Dr. Anderson and his assistants at work. At that time he had over thirty dead and wounded lying in his enclosure. The wounded white men bore their sufferings manfully, never uttering a groan or showing the slightest signs of fear, whilst the wounded friendlies were howling in a most dismal and disheartening manner.

This was the first time I fully realised the position and my own responsibility as officer commanding, and I was glad that it was not possible for the men in the fighting line to see much of the hospital enclosure.

I watched with pleasure and satisfaction the demeanour of the men bringing in the wounded, and was glad to observe that as soon as they laid down a wounded comrade they at once ran back to their respective places in the fighting line, and took up the firing without making a remark. Dr. Anderson seemed to be oblivious of everything, except a devotion to his duty. He took the men as they came; bandaging them and

passing on to the next, with a few cheering words to each. He certainly proved himself the right man in the right place, and is deserving of all praise.

The fight at Shangani and Bembesi, during the compaign of occupation in 1893, were, in my opinion, mere flea-bites compared with Inugu.

The following is a list of the killed and wounded :—

Killed	Corp. J. Hall ...	B Troop
„	Trpr. P. Bennett	E Troop M.M.P.
„	„ W. H. Bush	„ „
Severely wounded	Serg. C. H. Halkett	Maxim Troop Belingwe F.F.
„ „	„ M. Eadie ...	F Troop M.M.P.
„ „	Trpr. D. Dick ...	Belingwe F.F.
„ „	„ T. Judge ...	„ „
„ „	„ J. R. Toulson	„ „
„ „	„ C. O. Morgan	Died July 23rd
Slightly wounded	„ A. M. Stewart	„ „
„ „	„ C. Sell ...	M.M.P.
„ „	„ F. H. Miller	„
„ „	Corp. C. S. Roger	Belingwe F.F.

The native contingent had fifteen wounded and twenty-seven killed and missing.

We also lost nine horses, which were killed or died of their wounds, and had two wounded, with three mules killed and three wounded. After the fresh Impi was fairly routed the order was given to inspan, and the column moved forward to try and get to the entrance of Cheleli valley, which our native guides told us was only a short way ahead now, and the way to it through fairly easy country. The last part of their information proved tolerably correct, but as they were never able to point out an entrance to the valley I am certain they were at fault as to its whereabouts.

The column advanced along a valley running parallel with Cheleli, about half a mile broad, banded on either side by a line of rugged hills, and halted at 10 a.m. with its left flank up against a rocky kopje, where the valley had narrowed down to about a hundred yards wide. There was a little water here, and it was decided to breakfast. The friendlies were posted on the hills on either side, and Cossack posts put out.

Laager had not been formed more than half an hour when the friendlies and Cossacks on the left flank reported the advance of an Impi up Cheleli valley. This Impi came on rapidly, and joined with part of the defeated one, which had followed the line of hills on our left, picking up stragglers as they went along, keeping the hills between themselves and the column. When they were joined by the new Impi they halted, and after a short time both Impis moved off rapidly in the direction of Umshamo.

The column moved forward again at 11 a.m., and laagered up about eight miles further on, well past the centre of this part of the Matopos. Our guides had failed to point out an entrance to the valley, and as the position we now occupied was a good one, I decided to halt there for the night. From the hills on our right a good view of the country to the north could be obtained. The scouts and native contingent were sent on to watch for any movements of the enemy. About 3 p.m. they reported a large

body of rebels marching over the hills from Cheleli valley towards Fynn's farm, and shortly after another lot with cattle, women, and children moving in the same direction. These I took to be rebels retreating in front of Colonel Plumer's attack.

They all crossed over and disappeared behind the granite ridges, about three miles to the north-west of our position, before sundown.

CHAPTER XX

Burial of the dead—Distrust in the native guides—The column counter-marches to Chawner's camp—Arrival of Colonel Baden-Powell and two squadrons—Column ordered to proceed to Belingwe with provisions—Relief of garrison—Attack on Mazezeteze—Mondi's position found deserted — Return of column to Belingwe.

AS soon as the laager was formed and in a good state of defence, the bodies of our comrades killed in action that morning, which were brought along on the wagons, were interred in one grave, and a large cairn of stones erected on the top of it by the men of the column.

At 8 p.m. three star-shells were sent up to indicate our position to the other column, but they were not answered.

I spent an anxious night, and made certain the rebels would attack again, unless they had been routed all round. The men stood to arms as usual before daybreak, but no

rebels showed up. Shortly after it was light enough to see well patrols and scouting parties were sent out in all directions, each returning to report that no rebels were to be seen, or any signs of them. The guides were again questioned as to the entrance of Cheleli valley. They said that the entrance was now only a short way ahead to our left. The column moved forward again about one and a half miles, when Lieutenant McDonald rode in and reported that he had lost all faith in the native guides, who, he said, were leading us astray, either from fear or design. I saw it was futile to go further under the circumstances, and the condition of our wounded men had to be considered. They could not be got back too soon to a place where they could rest and be well looked after. I halted the column and called the officers together, explained the situation, and decided to return by the road we had come in. The column counter-marched at once, and shortly after sundown reached Chawner's camp and laagered up for the night.

From the time the rebels were observed disappearing over the hill to the eastward, on the afternoon of the 20th, we had only seen two niggers, and they, just as we left the Inugu gorge behind us, fired on a foraging party and fled. As we passed over the battlefield on our way back, many more dead bodies of the enemy were seen lying about. In all probability they were the bodies of wounded men who had got out of the rocks and endeavoured to reach a small rivulet to drink. One wounded man had hanged himself.

The friendly indunas were ordered to count the enemy's dead as we returned, and between them they reported having seen ninety. I presume this was a fairly accurate report.

We had scarcely been more than an hour in laager at Chawner's camp, before the sentries announced the approach of a large body of men and horses from the direction of Inugu, and presently a bugle sounded the general salute. Shortly afterwards Colonel

Baden-Powell rode into laager and asked who we were. He had been sent out with two squadrons to look for my column, the absence of which had somewhat disturbed the peace at headquarters. He told us of all that had taken place with Plumer's column, and that after their fight they had gone back to Usher's No. 2. This explained why our signals had not been answered on the evening of the 20th, and made me feel very thankful that my column was clear of the mountains. I had an idea that once in the hills we were to stay there until the rebels went out.

Colonel Baden-Powell took a few notes of our engagement, and returned to headquarters at once, taking the two squadrons with him. Before leaving he arranged to send an ambulance wagon and doctors to assist our wounded.

The following morning about 11 a.m. the ambulance wagon arrived under mounted escort, along with Dr. Sutcliffe, who came to assist Dr. Anderson with the wounded.

After they had all been properly attended to, the column marched on to Usher's No. 2, arriving about 3 p.m.

I rode on a little in front as we neared headquarters, and met Captain Beresford with a squadron of horse coming to look for us, and render any assistance that might be required; luckily none was required.

On arriving in camp I met General Carrington, who congratulated the column and me on our successful engagement.

The following day the column moved towards Buluwayo, leaving the M.M.P., and F Troop R.H.V. at headquarters.

Our instructions now were to take provisions on to the garrison at Belingwe as fast as possible.

On arrival at Buluwayo I met Captain Frankland, who had, after fixing up our depôt at Matabele Wilson's farm, marched a party of forty to join Plumer's column, and was engaged in the attack on Babyaan's stronghold. Frankland had been very busy in Buluwayo, and with his usual push had

got all the wagons in good order and loaded with provisions for Belingwe. A day's rest was necessary to give us a chance of overhauling everything, and the shoeing of the horses seen to. Then we were ready to start.

I was glad in a way and very sorry in another, to have to part with two of my best officers, in Surgeon-Captain Anderson and Lieutenant Donald Campbell. As a doctor Anderson was perfect, and I don't believe a better leader of Cape boys could have been found than Donald Campbell proved himself to be. They were both promoted—Dr. Anderson to the position of District-Surgeon of Buluwayo, and Campbell to that of chief of the detective staff of Rhodesia.

On the morning of the 26th of July the provision convoy was ready, and the column marched for Belingwe. We had instructions from the brigade officer to laager up near Thabas Induna and scout the vicinity, as another Impi had been reported hovering about in that direction.

On the 27th I signalled back to the brigade office, "No signs of Impi," and marched on, reaching "Denendeen" on the the evening of the 28th, where I again communicated with the brigade office, twenty-seven miles, by heliograph. On the evening of the 29th the laager was formed on the east bank of the Inseza River, fifty miles from Buluwayo.

On the 30th the column crossed the Inseza hills and laagered on their eastern flank. On our way through, Lieutenant Campbell, who was in charge of our signalling staff, tried to get into communication with Bembesi by heliograph, but failed, owing, I believe, to a heavy haze.

Towards sundown on the evening of the 30th two despatch-riders caught up the column bearing despatches from the brigade office with instructions to keep a sharp look-out for any retreating rebels from the Matopos.

On the 31st I sent seven wagons, with an escort of infantry under Lieutenant

Caldecott, to relieve Belingwe, and moved the mounted men in the dusk, under a large hill, where we would be fairly well hid, and gain a good view of the surrounding country. We laid there for two days scouting the country in every direction, but the rebels showed no signs of being anywhere about. The whole country for miles round had been burned by grass fires and there was no food for the horses. I had therefore to move forward again on the 2nd towards dusk, and on the evening of the 3rd laagered up at Posselt's farm, twelve miles from Belingwe, and ninety-five from Buluwayo. Here the grazing was excellent, with plenty of good water.

I now made up my mind to leave the column and ride on to Belingwe, with a small escort, to see how matters were with the garrison there. I started on the morning of the 4th and found on arrival that Lieutenant Caldecott had got his convoy safely through and that the men of the garrison were all right, and not in want of provisions as we

had been led to believe. All this was very satisfactory.

On the 5th the garrison was relieved by men from the field force. The relieved garrison joined the field force the same evening.

The following day all the farriers set to work to overhaul the horses, and see to the shoeing of them, and of the mules.

The column had a holiday which they spent in a shooting competition, troop against troop. The Staff put in the best shooting team, and Sergeant Lawrence, of B Troop made the highest score.

Captain James Stoddart, who had been in command of the garrison at Belingwe, reported that all was quiet in the district, except at Wedza's, Mazezeteze's, and Mondi's, where he believed the rebels held strong positions.

I decided to march a force against Mazezeteze and Mondi, and on the morning of the 7th, leaving Lieutenant Yonge with A Troop in charge of our depôt at Posselt's

farm, marched a patrol of fifty mounted white men, E Troop, Captain Stoddart's infantry, and thirty Cape boys, towards Mazezeteze's. After crossing the Umchingwe River, the scouts were sent on to Mondi's, and towards sundown the patrol laagered within about two miles of the latter and about the same distance from Mazezetezes. The scouts reported that the rebels at Mondi were in large numbers, but did not show signs of any antagonism. They contented themselves with watching the movements of the scouts in an indifferent sort of manner.

On the morning of the 8th the column moved forward again and laagered close up to the south end of Mazezeteze's hill. About 7 a.m. the order was given to have breakfast and prepare to storm the position, a granite hill about two miles long, a mile broad, and in some parts five hundred feet high. The top rocks were crooked, the open fissures forming what are generally known as caves, in which the rebels are very expert in finding protection from any

attacking force, using all the natural advantages such positions afford for dealing a blow in return.

Whilst the men were having breakfast, the rebels showed up very boldly on the most prominent parts of the hill and shouted down to us all sorts of defiant abuse.

As E Troop, under Captain Stoddart, had been pent up in Belingwe for over six weeks, it was only natural that they were anxious to have a brush with the enemy. I sent Captain Stoddart and his men round the south end of the mountain, with instructions to storm the kraals and drive the rebels out of the position on that side. Captain Frankland was sent off with a few mounted men to watch the operations and send in reports as they proceeded. Lieutenant Beisly was sent with B Troop mounted half-way up and about five hundred yards away from the east flank of the hill, to cut off any rebels who might retreat to the bush-covered slopes of the Bungwe hills, which ran parallel to, and about three miles east

of, Mazezeteze's. Lieutenant Howe with twenty Cape boys was sent to cut off the retreat on the north end of the position.

As soon as E Troop disappeared round the southern end of the field, the seven-pounder was sent out, and Sergeant Perry commenced to shell the positions where the most of the rebels were to be seen. The shells soon made them take cover, and very shortly after a sharp rattle of musketry announced that E Troop was engaged. This lasted for about a quarter of an hour and then a large column of smoke rising from the side of the hill, on which E Troop were at work, showed that the first kraal had been taken and destroyed. This again was followed by a few more clouds of smoke and then the rebels could be seen retreating toward the north end of their position assisted on their way by an occasional shell from the seven-pounder. Information was sent round that the southern portion of the hill had been cleared, and that Captain Stoddart was advancing to attack the

northern portion, where the rebels had all located themselves and were compelled to stay and fight it out, seeing that the base of the hill was surrounded by a line of Cape boy skirmishers. The rattle of rifle fire announced the attack of this portion of the enemy's position. Shortly after midday Captain Frankland rode in and reported that the rebels had all been driven into the northern end of the hill, and that without the aid of the seven-pounder it would be impossible to take them out of the position. One man, Trooper Woest, had been shot dead, and was still lying close up to the caves.

The gun detachment were sent forward at once, and Sergeant Perry shelled the caves in rotation, until the rebels were shifted from one to another of them, and finally went to earth. Trooper Woest's body was then recovered.

A linguist tried to get into conversation with the rebels, offering them their lives and liberty if they surrendered. After many

vain endeavours the attempt was given up as the rebels never replied.

It was now almost sundown and the troops were ordered back to the laager—E Troop very much fagged with their hard day's work.

The following morning Trooper Woest's remains were interred about eight hundred yards west of the south end of Mazezeteze's mountains and a large cairn of stones erected over his grave to mark the spot.

A light mounted patrol was sent round the mountain to try and get in touch with the rebels, but during the night the latter had retreated towards the M'Popoti Hills, taking the women and children with them.

The column then moved to the south-east, in the direction of Mondi's position, which was found deserted. The action against Mazezeteze had shattered Mondi's faith. He and his following had gone to Wedza's, where I decided to let them stay. All the kraals here were destroyed and the column moved to the Umchingwe River and laagered for the night on its north bank.

The following morning a drift was made through the river-bed, by which the column crossed, reaching Posselt's farm by midday. Here Lieutenant Yonge had nothing of importance to report, as no rebels or any signs of them had been seen by his patrols.

On the 11th the column marched south-east in the direction of Belingwe Peak. Scouting parties were sent out to see if Um'Nyati had returned. He had not, and there were no fresh signs of the rebels about.

On the afternoon of the 12th the column laagered up at A. Little's camp, about five miles south-west of Belingwe, where the wagons were dismantled and the men put on to repair them.

By the morning of the 19th the wagons had been overhauled and the horses re-shod and everything got ready for another march.

While the men had been busy repairing I took advantage of the halt, and with a small patrol, which consisted of Captains Hopper and Frankland, Mr. Percy Hare, and a few mounted men, visited some of

the principal mining camps in the district. Stoddart's camp at the "Great Belingwe" had been looted and destroyed by fire, as well as the camps at "Bob's Luck" and "Wanderers' Rest" mines. The damage done to machinery alone at the "Bob's Luck" mine amounted to about £1,000. Many of the smaller mining camps had not been destroyed, and the claim pegs and beacons were all intact. No fresh spoor of rebels was to be seen anywhere.

CHAPTER XXI

Departure of column for Buluwayo—Attack on Tandodzie's position—Sudden disappearance of the rebels—Lieutenant Wilson, with convoy and despatches, joins column at "Finger Kop"—Surrender of chiefs in Belingwe district—Death and burial of Sergeant Perry—Arrival of column at Buluwayo—Address by Earl Grey and disbandment of column.

ON the morning of the 19th the column again moved in the direction of Buluwayo, but by a new route; the intention being to make a new road from Belingwe to Inseza, through the bush-covered flats close to the Umchingwe River, and to make that river, which is a most difficult one to cross with wagons, fordable, by opening out several drifts at different points. By doing this the rugged country to the north, I took it, would be made more easy of access from the main road, which ran about five miles to the south.

Lieutenant Yonge was left with a detachment of mounted men and a Nordenfelt at Posselt's farm, with the horses and mules that were unfit for work.

On the 25th Tandodzie's stronghold was to be attacked, but the first two shells stopped all resistance. The rebels in sight (there were only about thirty of them) took to their heels and disappeared in the bush.

On the evening of the 26th the column laagered on the open flats on the east bank of the Shangantopi spruit, where we had again to deal with a grass fire, which the rebels had arranged for our annoyance. It was not such a violent one as the first, but it destroyed all the grass in the district.

On the 27th we laagered at "Finger Kop," about five miles east of Inseza, to wait for Lieutenant Wilson, quartermaster of the Belingwe garrison, who, with a small convoy of wagons and eleven men, was, at this point, expected with grain and provisions for the column.

On the morning of the 28th Wilson turned up and reported all quiet on the road between Belingwe and Inseza. He brought information from Lieutenant Caldecott, who had been left in charge at Belingwe, and Lieutenant Jackson, Acting Native Commissioner there, to the effect that six native chiefs had come in to surrender. Jackson was instructed to accept their surrender, and send them back to their kraals, with orders to keep their arms for the purpose of enabling them to help the white man against the other rebels, if necessary, and to keep the garrison at Belingwe posted as to the movements of any of the latter in the district.

The chiefs said the action against Mazezeteze's had made them decide to surrender, and that as many of our shells had done great havoc in many of the caves, the natives in the district were convinced that the white man was more than able to beat them, and now wished to make peace rather than be killed. Wedza, they said, was still in his

cave, and Mondi's people were in one of the adjoining hills, but as these two tribes were at loggerheads over some cattle they would in all probability fight with each other very soon.

Um'Nyati had taken all his people into the Mapelabana Mountains, did not wish to fight any more, and was afraid the white men would catch him.

Mr. Jackson had instructions to send peaceful messages to all, and to try and establish a feeling of confidence between white and black in that district.

I thought it best to allow Wedza and Mondi's people to settle their own affair, knowing full well that, with the other natives in the district friendly, they would be quite harmless.

I was aware that their position was strong —the strongest in the country. Before the rebellion broke out I had often been at Wedza's, and knew it well; but as their following was a small one—Wedza's about forty and Mondi's about fifty fighting men—I

always believed they were just about so evenly balanced as to keep each other in order. They never did any harm in the district after the column left, but owing, I believe, to conflicting rumours and reports being sent to headquarters, Colonel Baden-Powell was sent against Wedza, with a force of hussars, &c., and the remainder of the Belingwe Field Force. After two days' hard work Wedza's stronghold was destroyed. An account of the taking of Wedza's was forwarded to me by an officer of the Belingwe Field Force who was present, but as he had not seen so much of the fighting as Colonel Baden-Powell, who has so thoroughly and brilliantly described the whole affair in his admirable work, I do not think it necessary to publish my officer's report.

The column moved forward again on the 29th, but before doing so we had a melancholy duty to perform. Sergeant Perry, who was in charge of the gun detachment, had contracted enteric fever, some two days

before, and unfortunately had succumbed to it early in the morning. Perry was an excellent soldier, and his goodness of character in every respect had endeared him to every one of the column. His sudden death cast a gloom over all. His remains lie under a Marula-tree, about 170 yards south of "Finger Kop," and his grave, like all others who had gone before him, was covered with a large cairn of stones.

The column marched on after he was buried, and laagered up at the ruins of Cumming's store, in the Inseza hills. Here we halted for the greater part of the day.

It was here that Colonel the Hon. Maurice Gifford had his first fight after the rebellion broke out, the marks of which were still quite visible. As Gifford had to bury some of his dead under fire, their graves were not very well finished, but our men put them all to rights ere we marched on again.

On the 13th we crossed the Inseza range of hills and laagered at the foot of the western slope. Whilst here Captain J. Warrick

came up with a detachment of police from Buluwayo, with orders to establish a post at Rixon's farm, on the Inseza. Warrick told me all about the peace negotiations going on between Mr. Rhodes and the rebels in the Matopos. This was pleasant information, and on hearing it I determined to march the column straight for Buluwayo.

On the 1st of September I left the column in charge of Captain Hopper, about sixteen miles from Buluwayo, and rode on to report myself, taking a small mounted escort with me.

Captain Hopper brought the column in slowly and laagered on our old camp ground two days later.

On arriving at Buluwayo I reported myself to the General and Administrator.

They were both glad to hear of the column's safe arrival and that the natives in the Belingwe district were suing for peace.

Before the column got in arrangements were made for disbanding a portion of the officers and men. Captain Hopper was ordered back to the Inseza district to try and

bring some of the rebels who were lurking about there to reason, but he had all his march for nothing, as no rebels were to be found.

After Captain Hopper marched for Inseza I applied to the G. O. C. for permission to resign and take up the duties of my company, the work of which was very much in arrear in every department.

General Carrington was most kind and considerate under the circumstances, and on my promising to look after the affairs of the column when it came to be disbanded, he told me that he would accede to my request, and forthwith the following General Orders were published :—

"Extracts from General Orders by Major General Sir Frederick Carrington, K.C.M.G., commanding forces. Headquarters' Office Buluwayo, September 7th :

"3. A portion of Captain Laing's Belingwe Field Force will be disbanded from the 7th inst.

"4. Captain Laing retires from his command and is given the rank of honorary Major. The General Officer commanding wishes to place on record his high appreciation of the excellent services rendered by this officer during the late operations."

"Extract from General Orders, 18th September:

"1. The following officers of the Belingwe Field Force resign their appointments from the 7th inst. inclusive: Captain James Stoddart, Lieutenant A. J. Wilson, Lieutenant Malcolm McCallum."

Captain Hopper's patrol got back from Belingwe and Inseza districts on the evening of September 29th, and orders were issued for the disbanding of the column next day.

About 11 a.m. on the 30th of September all that remained of the Belingwe Field Force, except the detachment at Belingwe, marched into Buluwayo and paraded in front of the Administrator, Earl Grey, who re-

ceived them most cordially, and addressed them on behalf of the Chartered Company in the following words:—

"Major Laing, Captain Hopper, Captain Frankland, Officers, Non-commissioned Officers, and men of the Belingwe Field Force, this is the second time I have had the pleasure of addressing you, and thanking you on behalf of the Company which I represent, for the gallant conduct you have displayed in the field on all occasions during the rebellion. I stand by what I have already said to you, men, when I first had the pleasure of meeting you, when you passed through here on your way to the Matopo Mountains; that if every district had stuck together and defied the rebels as you did, the rebellion would never have reached the dimensions it did. You are being disbanded, and to me this is a sure sign that the rebellion is at an end; the force of this fact is brought home forcibly to me, when I see your old commanding officer, standing

here without his uniform, and you can retire proudly on laurels that have been bravely won. You have made your district of Belingwe famous, and the white men respected by natives in every part of it. You will now adjourn with me to the Chartered Hotel where we will drink to the future prosperity of Rhodesia and success to its inhabitants in years to come. But before doing so I will read to you the General Order for disbanding you.

"'BULUWAYO,

"'*September* 30, 1896.

"'The General Officer commanding, in disbanding the Belingwe Field Force to-day, wishes to convey to Major Laing, Captain Hopper, and the remaining officers, non-commissioned officers, and troopers of the force, his high appreciation of the service they have rendered during the rebellion, of the gallant conduct they have on so many occasions shown on the field, especially in the action at Inugu Mountain, on the 20th July,

and of the high sense of duty which has been conspicuous among all ranks throughout the campaign.

"'By Order.

"'(Signed) C. B. VYVYAN,

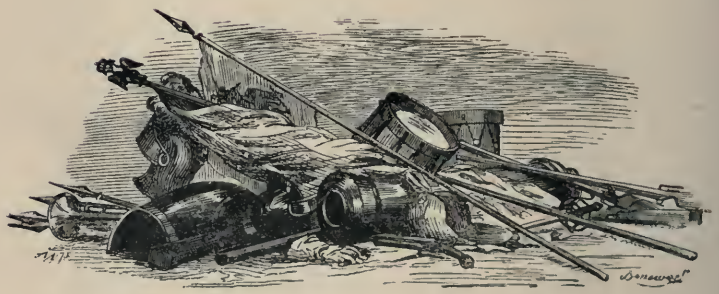
"'Captain.

"'Brigade Major, Staff Officer in chief.'"

Earl Grey then called for three cheers for the Belingwe Field Force—a call which was responded to heartily by the bystanders, a large number of whom had gathered to see the Corps disband.

For the Earl's speech I am indebted to one of the spectators who took shorthand notes and then transcribed them for me afterwards.

As soon as the men had had some light refreshment they handed in all their equipment, and were dismissed; and thus, after a short but brilliant career, the Belingwe Field Force became a thing of the past.



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